

ALL THE YEAR ROUND.

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HESTER'S HISTORY.

A NEW SERIAL TALE.

CHAPTER XIV. GOING TO GLENLUCE.

On this subject—the question of how Hester was to be conveyed to Glenluce—the Mother Augustine took council with her brother. For Sir Archie Munro had not yet gone from London.

He had been coming nearly every day to visit his sister in her convent, and very often he had seen Hester at her work in the mother's room. He acknowledged himself rather shocked at her childish occupation of dressing dolls; thought her too full-grown and serious-looking for so simple a diversion.

"She does these little things very prettily, you know," he said one day, when she was absent at Hampton Court, and he lifted and handled a little figure with a man's curiosity about a woman's work. "But isn't it rather an odd amusement for a young woman? And she is a young woman, you know, Mary; young, indeed, but still a woman."

The Mother Augustine was very merry over this mistake. "So you have thought that poor Hester was playing the baby!" she said. "But you must know that each of these figures represents a woman—my mother, for instance, or Cousin Madge."

"My mother! Cousin Madge!" repeated Sir Archie, in bewilderment.

"Yes, or any other lady requiring to be handsomely clothed by a pair of skilful hands. These are not a child's dolls, but a dress-maker's models."

Sir Archie did not follow the explanation. At all events, it did not enlighten him as to Hester's actual calling.

"And I want to consult with you about getting our young protégée sent to Ireland," said the mother. "I have found her a home. You could never guess where. In Glenluce Castle."

Sir Archie's face beamed with satisfaction. "Why, how have you managed it?" he said. "I should not have thought it easy to persuade my mother to invite her. I did think myself of petitioning Aunt Margaret—"

"But, Archie," said the mother, gravely, "You must not be under a mistake. This

young girl is not going as a visitor to Glenluce. My mother needs a dressmaker and seamstress at the Castle, and I have accepted the situation for Hester."

Sir Archie was a long time taking it in. That his mother should have need of some one to do her sewing he could not wonder, but that Hester should be sent into his house in such a character; it did not seem to please him.

"I do not think such an arrangement can ever suit," he said. "Aunt Margaret would have taken her in upon a visit. I had thought of writing to her."

"You had thought of writing to her!" said the Mother Augustine, in surprise, and then checked herself and was silent, though she looked as if she could have said more.

Her brother glanced up suddenly, at the change in her voice, and met her eyes. And then he did a thing unheard of in the family traditions of Sir Archie—blushed.

The Mother Augustine returned Hester's little lay figure to its box in silence; and began to speak of something else. In the midst of such speaking the sound of a carriage was heard outside upon the stones, the door was thrown open, and Hester appeared.

Her fair hair was dressed gracefully under a pretty little hat. She wore a pale grey robe of silk, and long coral ear-rings in her ears. Her cheeks were flushed with a slight shame, and her lips were quivering with a joyful smile. She was conscious of being better dressed than it was fitting she should be, but so eager to see her friend that the uneasiness of such consciousness was swallowed up in joy.

She advanced a few steps into the room, then stopped short, and stood abashed. Sir Archie on the one side looked flushed and embarrassed, the Mother Augustine, on the other, looked grave and displeased.

Hester stood, as at bay, for a few moments, seeming as if she would have turned and run away, then suddenly came forward rapidly, pulled off her coquettish hat and threw it on the table.

"I knew how it would be," she said, in a low vehement voice, a tear flashing from under her drooped eyelids. "Lady Humphrey would insist on dressing me up so. I knew it was not right; that you would not like it."

The Mother Augustine glanced at her brother, and caught the expression of his face, before he

turned and walked away to the window. It seemed that things were taking a strange turn. But no perplexity of mind could make the mother unjust, even for an hour.

She drew a long anxious sigh, and put her arm round the girl's trembling figure.

"Put on your pretty hat, my child," she said. "Your charming dress becomes you very well." Perhaps she reflected that if the pearl had already been discovered, it did not make much matter about the setting. But none the less was she uneasy in her mind. Sir Archie was not a man who took much notice of strange women. If his peculiar interest in Hester should continue, what was this that she, the Mother Augustine, had done?

But, let the mischief be what it might, it was accomplished. Hester's trunks were in the convent hall, side by side with the small luggage of a lay sister who was to travel with her to Ireland. Lady Helen, among her mountains, was waiting impatiently to be attired like one of the dolls upon her dressing-table. Hester must go, come what might.

A strong foreshadowing of some part of the strange things which were to happen was on the Mother Augustine's mind when she gave her parting instructions to Hester.

One of these injunctions came right pleasantly to the girl's ear, though she did not know at the time how much it comprehended. It was this:

"If ever you are in a difficulty, remember that you can find a friend in Mrs. Hazeldean."

But another was more startling, and not so easy to obey.

"Unless absolutely questioned on the subject, you are not to speak of your connexion with Lady Humphrey. You are not even to mention her name."

Now how could this injunction be obeyed? Hester remembered Lady Humphrey's last instructions, which were yet ringing in her ears. She remembered Pierce Humphrey's petition, and her promise made to him. She wore his ring on a ribbon, for safety, round her neck. She blushed up to her hair at this new command.

"It will be difficult——" began Hester.

"You need not find it difficult," said the mother. "You may speak of her to Mrs. Hazeldean, but not at the Castle. It will make mischief if you are foolish enough to forget this."

So Hester reluctantly gave her word. What then? Was she to post her letters secretly to Lady Humphrey? It must be so; for she could not forget her promise which had been made to that lady, nor misuse her opportunity of doing a service to Sir Archie. She kept thinking how much would the mother alter her way of thinking did she know Lady Humphrey's anxiety about her brother. But here also she was bound to silence. And she departed on her journey considering deeply in her mind how best she should be able to obey both these friends.

The lay sister who travelled with Hester was

bound for the little convent at Glenluce. Sir Archie acted as escort on the journey, and the three arrived in the shades of an autumn evening at Glenluce Castle gate.

There was company at the castle; a few visitors from Dublin. Lights were glinting from the small windows of the long low grey wall of the oldest wing, but the ivy-covered turrets still kept some hue of their rich green in the outer air. A faint glow from the vanished sun still hung about the castellated summits of the walls, while the damp purple air of the heavy twilight had darkened the more distant walls and chimneys, and grouped them along with the trees in an indistinguishable mass. That odour which tells of the neighbourhood of heathery mountains was in the air, mingled with the perfumes from well-stocked gardens somewhere near. There was a murmur of waters all around, for the falls had already begun their music; and when the wind took a fit of wrestling among the trees, pale streaks of moving mist became visible between the shadows, like long spectres descending out of the clouds, and crawling with straggling limbs along the hills to the lower earth.

The entrance to the castle was new when compared with the little old gate, studded with big black nails, which now frowned in disgrace at the back of the building. Yet even this door, which was called new, looked old-fashioned enough, with its oddly shaped steps and its curious bronze urns. If Lady Helen Munro had not been busy in her dressing-room she might have come to this open door to welcome her son upon the threshold, such good old customs having it all their own way at Glenluce. It was lucky, perhaps, that there was a delay in the fixing of an ear-ring, or the pinning of a ringlet, or this lady of a noble house might have fainted on a mat to see the order of his arrival, and his conduct on the occasion. Yet the simple lay sister, who remained sitting quietly in the coach, waiting to be moved on, saw nothing but what was fitting in Sir Archie's care of Hester.

But the lay sister departed, and went dreaming through the dusk, down the glen, about her people who had been buried in the little graveyard by the sea, whose peaceful graves she should visit on the morrow. And, forgetting fever, and cholera, bad wounds, and broken limbs, she strewed her prayers on the night air as she went, all in thanksgiving that she had seen her native glens once again.

In the mean time Hester was in the castle hall on the stairs, in an upper corridor, where she was detained a few moments standing waiting, the servant who was attending her having been called away by accident. There was everywhere a dim religious light, and an air of ancient repose about the grandeur of the place. As if in its mobility there was no disdain. As if the same time that had rubbed the edges of its carvings, rounded the little corners, and softened most sharp-set outlines, had stolen the fire of barbaric pride from the oak heart of

the ancient roof-tree, and only left a solemn dignity in its place. Here was something that impressed one, as if a simple childlike spirit were looking forth from solemn eyes.

Two voices went whispering, round the corner of the passage, of servants who had met going their several errands.

"Praises be to God, he's home!" said one whisper. "They were havin' it in the village this mornin' that he was took."

"Holy Vargin!" said the other, "I niver h'ard a word o' that. Did her ladyship know it?"

"Not herself!" said the first whisper, "or it's in stericks she'd a been. We kep' it dark as duncheon in the kitchen. But the people in the village har'ly slep' a wink all night."

"Well, thank the Lord of Heaven, we have him back safe an' sound."

And then Hester's conductor made an appearance, with apologies; and the stranger was conducted to her room.

It was a ghostly round room, this room in the east tower, which had been assigned to the new comer's especial use. It had two quaint turret windows, knowing the secrets of the glen, looking down on green peaceful slopes, peering up at wild lonely wildernesses of wood, and of rock, and of mist. A strait strip of tapestry hung by each side of these narrow windows, like the single scanty tress by each cheek of an aged face. There were figures wrought in this tapestry; and as the breeze that came in with Hester stirred its folds, the figures nodded their heads, a moan went through the sash, and a shudder shook the dim panes of the windows.

There was a pleasant fire of turf alight in the grate. It made the dark corners glower, and the glasses on the pictures flash; and for the two black marble nips who carried the chimney-piece on their shoulders, it threw a lurid light of mischief into their eyes, making them wink at each other and grin till they seemed plotting to pull the walls about their ears.

But whatever else the fire did it gave Hester a cordial greeting. The door was shut in the passage, and it had her all to itself. It laughed in her face, it licked her hands, it stroked her head, and made murmurs over her. It approved and caressed her, it loved, and perhaps pitied her. It purred in her ear, "Cheer up, and don't cry!" It may also have meant, "You have come here to much trouble!" Hester only understood that it was a friend giving a welcome.

She untied the strings of her hat, and spread her hands before the fire. Those whispers heard in the passage still went rustling through her ears. Lady Humphrey had said well that Sir Archie was in danger. But these people did not know that he had a friend able and willing to protect him; still less could they imagine that she (Hester) was to be the instrument to be made use of by the saving hands of that friend. Now how strangely all other in-

terests had grown trivial compared with this one. She thought but little of Janet Golden and her lover; she thought less of Lady Helen and her gowns.

A servant brought her dinner and a lighted lamp. After dinner she unpacked her desk, and set to work to write a letter to Lady Humphrey. The wind began to rumble round the tower, and to pipe, like an organ, in the chimney. The windows began to moan, and the faces on the tapestry to nod. Hester's first letter of tidings from Glenluce was getting written. A slim young person, in a pale woollen dress, with the lamplight making a glitter about her fair bent head. This was Hester, as a person might behold her from the doorway.

CHAPTER XV. VISITORS IN THE TOWER.

HESTER had three lady visitors in her tower that night, and the first of the three was Janet Golden.

Miss Golden was dressing for dinner when she heard the wheels of a coach. Miss Golden was very pretty, as I think I have said before. She and her mirror were fully aware of this fact, and to-night they were taking note of it as usual.

Miss Golden was not a young lady to hear the wheels of a coach without going to the window to see further into the matter. She put her face to the pane, and saw Sir Archie alight. She kept her face to the pane, and saw Hester alight. She pressed her face to the pane, and saw Sir Archie leading Hester up his steps to his hall-door.

It seemed that Miss Janet did not like what she saw. She quarrelled with her maid, and dismissed her in a pet; and after this had been accomplished she made a rent in her handsome dinner-dress; and after this last had been effected, she sat down before her fire, and began to think.

That effort, to a young lady of fashion, was just as difficult in those days as in these. Janet hardly knew what vexed her, and could not task herself so far as to find out. She ought to have been glad to see Sir Archie coming home, and she was not glad. She was weary of her life at Glenluce, and yet she would not go away. She was longing to be back in London, and yet they talked of a wedding here. She was to be mistress in these glens, and she yawned at the dreary thought.

She had had a good resting time while Sir Archie was in London. She had been dull to be sure, but she could not avoid that. She had been neither so gay nor so ill-humoured as when Sir Archie had been at home. She had had some leisure to remember that there was something in the world which she had fancied, and had not got. She had had it between her fingers, and thrown it away. She had expected it would come back again, but it had not come as yet. In the hurry of her daily business at Glenluce—which was to tease Sir Archie Munro—she had formerly had no time to remember what she wanted. In his absence she had

gained leisure. And she had made such good use of her time that she could not see her way to forgetting, as before.

This Janet was, undoubtedly, a spoiled child of fortune. Luxury had been her nurse, her playfellow, her instructress. Her baby fingers had been amused by the whimsical distribution of many superfluous guineas. Gold had been a toy to her, and no one had ever thought it necessary to instruct her as to its value. She had always had so much that it seemed she had no need of any at all. She had not alone been saved from trouble in her own life, but she had never even come in contact with grief, suffering, or fear. Every one was thoughtful for her; every one was worshipful of her. Her hands were so full of everything that she could not stretch them forth to take hold of anything. There was nothing for her to choose, beyond the colour of a dress; there was nothing that she could dread, beyond the misfit of a boot. She had no need to check her tongue, for her impertinence was all wit: it were wrong to curb her temper, since her passions were only proof of a fine mettle. It were silly to seek for wisdom, since her follies were found charms; it were idle to mend her ignorance from books, since there were always people willing to tell her anything which she might happen to want to know. Her life was as full of boons as her jewel case of gems, and if she wanted to be thwarted she must quarrel with her shoestrings. The period of her days was like a box choked up with sugar-plums, all sweet, all smooth, all alike, all unwholesome.

There was just one little thing which she had wished to keep, and had lost. It had not been much to keep, she had thought, and so had been careless to hold it. It had not been a great deal to lose, she had said, when she found it had slipped away. How much she had missed it when it was gone she was far too proud ever to dream of acknowledging to herself.

She had had so many suitors it would have been a labour to her to count them. Of high degree, of low degree, of richer and of poorer, of younger and of older. And, if this thing which she had lost, which she regretted having lost, were the heart of a young, foolish, good-natured lover, what wonder that Miss Golden should feel dissatisfied with herself? It was as if some one overburdened with riches should stoop in search of a farthing. In addition to the discontentedness which had increased in her during his absence, Miss Golden was farther disturbed because Sir Archie had returned; for above all other people who came near her, Sir Archie had the knack of setting her world upside down.

Now, if these scraps of information as to Miss Golden's private feelings be considered most disjointed and unsatisfactory, it can only be said that in such respects they are the more like the young lady's thoughts.

Could it have been the seamstress whom he was waiting upon like that? Miss Janet was

asking questions of herself or the steel bars of her glowing grate. They expected her to-night, and her room had been prepared. She claimed to be a lady. "I will go this moment and visit her, and see what she is like. And if it so happens she be the dressmaker, I'll give her a task at once."

A few moments after this valiant resolution had been come to, a tap fell on Hester's door: then the door was quickly opened, without pause for further ceremony, and Miss Janet made a very handsome picture in the doorway.

Her white velvet gown was half hanging from her waist; a brilliant scarlet shawl was twisted loosely round her shoulders. Her dark curls were gathered to the crown of her pretty head, and held there in a soft wreath by a glittering jewelled clasp. Her fair, saucy, satin-cheeked young face was held aloft with a sort of natural disdain. Her brown eyes were sparkling with an imperious curiosity.

Hester, thus caught in her first act of secrecy, dropped her hands on the paper in a childish trepidation. So Janet saw her first, a look of fear in her up-turned eyes, hiding the letter she was writing with a guilty-looking impulse. Miss Golden noted the look and the gesture at the time, forgot about them afterwards, but later again remembered, when it might have been well she had still forgotten them.

"A sly little lackadaisy!" was Miss Janet's inward comment. "Beginning to write letters before she can well know where she is sitting. And hiding them up in a hurry, as if it were anybody's business but her own!"

Miss Janet had no reason for her ill-disposed feeling towards the young seamstress, except perhaps a general and undefined feeling that dressmakers had no business to be ladies. A humble sewing damsel with such an ambition should be checked. And if an enthusiastic nun like the Mother Augustine should encourage her, and if a philanthropic matron like Mrs. Hazelden should be imposed upon, all this was no reason why a gentleman like Sir Archie should stoop to wait on her like a lacquey. But such being actually the case, it was high time some person of common sense, and a proper perception of the fitness of things, should step in and show the young woman her mistake. So Miss Janet just stepped in, with her rent dress in her hand.

"You are the new seamstress, I believe," she said, with a little supercilious hesitation. "May I trouble you to mend my dress?"

Hester, so appealed to, was at her post in a moment, her needle threaded, thimble on finger. Her hand steady, her face composed. It was only when people were too good to her, or too thoughtful for her, that she was likely to lose her presence of mind. This splendid haughty young lady must be Pierce Humphrey's Janet Golden. And Hester, out of sympathy for the absent lover, set about the task of the mending with her fingers in their most dainty careful mood.

She stood close to Janet's shoulder, with her

hands among the folds of white velvet. It was an odd dress, but a handsome dress, she remarked, with her trained accuracy of judgment in such matters. And the wearer was an odd person, but a handsome person, she went on to observe, with the untrained accuracy of her natural instinct.

"She is taller than I am, and more beautiful," thought Janet, as Hester's drooping hair touched her own bare white shoulder. Miss Janet had an advantage over Hester, for in a long, dim, ghostly strip of mirror set in a wall she could see the striking contrast made by two girlish forms and faces.

"And her ancestors might have been princes when mine followed the plough!" continued Miss Janet, following a new idea through her very capricious mind.

The dress was mended; and adjusted on the wearer by Hester's hands. Then Miss Janet stood aloof, and regarded her gentle tirewoman.

"You shall come down to dinner with me," she said suddenly, much as she might have said, "you shall have a piece of cake," to a child. "Lady Helen will be quite content if I desire it. I will lend you a pretty gown. I will not have you mewed up here by yourself."

Miss Golden in this proposal need not be wondered at too much. Some people who knew her well would not have been surprised to hear her begging of a beggar to take a present of her purse, or ordering her milliner to make her a bonnet out a rainbow. She had an eye for beauty, and an instinct for breeding. She was a person who knew how to change her mind. She could give a blow and a kiss in the same breath.

"Thank you," said Hester, "but I have dined." And that was all she said. And this being so, Miss Janet retreated to the door in high amazement.

"Good night!" she said, "and thank you for your service." And then looking over her shoulder before she closed the door.

"And I hope, young woman," she said, "that you understand your business. If not, you will find little welcome here."

Hester had hardly got over the surprise of this first visit when some other knuckles came tapping on her door. The handle was turned again, and the Honourable Madge put in her head.

"So you are the dressmaker, my dear?" she said. "And a very charming young dressmaker I declare! Thirteen for dinner they said, and I would not go down for the world. And dear Archie just come home, and my cherry tabinet quite wasted!"

And she stroked down her dress.

"Just what I was at her age!" she said, seizing Hester's hand, and holding her a little off, scanning her up and down with half-closed eyes. "But time will make havoc." And she swayed herself to and fro, lifted her hand to feel that the likeness of her lover was in its place upon her forehead, and looked askance at the fire, with a half-sad, half-bitter little smile.

"You will excuse me, my dear, if I poke your fire?" And she made a little frisk towards the hearth. "The night is so cold, and you look such a sociable young person!"

Hester placed her a chair, and fetched her a footstool, and then, at her bidding, sat facing her by the fender.

"What is the news from the world, my dear?" she said, dropping her voice and looking cautiously round her. "They do tell such tales of the times. But Lady Helen don't allow any newspapers to come in. And Sir Archie is as close as an oyster. He laughs and says, 'I will not let them cut off your head, Cousin Madge.' (The Honourable Madge, my dear, to strangers.) So I said to myself, 'Our new dressmaker will have no scruples about telling me the truth.'"

"I know far less than you do, I am sure," said Hester, fearfully. "I have come straight from London, and I was shut up in a steamer or a coach all the way. In Dublin, at night there was a crowd in the streets. They said some one was being taken to prison. It was terrible, the crowd was so quiet."

"Ah, ah!" said Miss Madge, nodding her head, "better did they shout and roar. And hist! my dear—what is your name? Hester! Excuse the Christian name. It is so much more comfortable between friends. I call myself Madge, the Honourable Madge. Ah!" "This country is safe, is it not?" ventured Hester.

"Safe!" echoed Miss Madge, with a terrible little laugh. "Vesuvius, my dear, must be a nice safe place to live upon till the volcano begins to spout fire. Any night we may be hanged from our bed-posts."

Hester shuddered and drew nearer to the cherry tabinet.

"Or burned in our beds," said the Honourable Madge. "But that is no reason why we should have our dresses made unfashionably in the mean time. And I came here chiefly to compliment you on your dolls. Poor dolls would be burned, too, of course."

"But, madam," pleaded Hester, "please pardon me if I ask you, does not Sir Archie Munro discountenance the disturbances? He does not concern himself with the troubles?"

"Don't he?" cried the Honourable Madge, giving her head a toss, and snapping her fingers. "It may be that he don't. He may or he may not. If I were a man I should, I can tell you, that's all. I would lead out my clan to do battle!"

And the Honourable Madge grasped the poker, and made a fierce little flourish with it in the air.

"Look in there," she said again, stabbing the fire, and making the red cinders drop about. "Does it not look like rows of houses burning? La, my dear, don't turn so pale. And I wanted so much to speak to you about my new pink silk. Well, I'll bring it you in the morning."

And soon after this she pirouetted towards

the door, pointed her toes in her long sandalled slippers, kissed hands to Hester, and disappeared.

It was a very pale face that was raised in expectation when the third knock fell on Hester's door.

"Come in," said Hester, all her weariness and fearfulness in her voice.

"Have I come too soon?" asked Mrs. Hazelden, advancing out of the shadows with two outstretched hands, "I ought to have let you rest. Have I come too soon?"

Fools rush in where angels fear to tread. But Hester did not announce that she had had two visitors already. She only said "no" in thorough earnest; finding her fingers covered up in the clasp of two warm hands; letting her eyes take their delight in this new comer's rare face.

TYRANNY OF ART.

I, a wounded worm, am about to try turning, to see whether I can by any means wriggle out of my present abject condition, though, alas! a morbid development of the bump of veneration renders the hope a faint one. The first person singular is made use of in deference to the feelings of fellow-victims; but I am a representative man, and my class is a large one. Nature intended me to be happy, for she endowed me with a variety of tastes and a great capacity for enjoyment; but man has set up a number of artificial standards to which I am incapable of attaining, and this spoils my pleasure. Some of us are wise enough to take a line of their own and indulge their fancies, quite indifferent to the sneers or sermons of their kind; but as a rule we are dreadfully anxious to be in order, and to regulate our likes and dislikes in accordance with the dictates of acknowledged masters. We are diffident, subservient to authority, anxious to conciliate the cognoscenti; but we never get anything from them but contumely, which is most depressing. Persons of one taste wear its channel deep; I have many tastes and they are naturally all shallow. If I had no taste at all I might be esteemed, whereas each of my one-tasted acquaintances looks upon my feeble and partial admiration as a degradation to the art which he professes. When a man puts on a certain ineffable smile, accompanied with an elevation of the eyebrows and a slight shake of the head, I know what he is going to do; he is going to quote the only complete couplet of Pope that he knows.

A little knowledge is a dangerous thing,
Drink deep or taste not the Pierian spring.

Very mellifluous; but how is a man to get a large lump of knowledge all at once? Surely he must begin with a little. If knowledge be a good thing, a little of it must be better than none. Besides, if you come to that, what is a little, and what is much? At what point in our

educational voyage may we hope that we are past the mysterious shoals where danger lies? Then it is easy to say, "drink deep;" but Nature has denied me a capacious swallow or a strong head, and I protest against the supercilious cruelty which would grudge me the little sip which quenches my inferior thirst.

Why should Maule, my painting friend, rail at me so bitterly? It does not even appease him that I admire his own pictures, because it seems that the real merits are invisible to me, and that what gives me pleasure in them is of no artistic value. If I did not care for pictures at all, he would pity me merely; but that which excites his wrath and scorn is, that I get almost as much pleasure out of the minor beauties as he does out of the higher. He came upon me one day in the South Kensington Museum, gloating over one of Ward's pigs, and was not angry with me, "For you understand a good pig, I dare say," he condescendingly remarked. But I thought he would have gone stark staring mad with me on another occasion for presuming to enjoy a landscape of Turner's. I did not know it was a Turner; it was a painting which took hold of my imagination. I did not know why. There was a haze in the atmosphere which recalled all the most beautiful real sunrises and sunsets I had ever seen; and the longer I looked, the more powerful was the effect produced upon me. So I looked on, and got my soul into the picture, as it were, until I seemed to be wandering and exploring, like a gamboge spirit, about that waste of water, cloud, and mountain, when Maule burst upon me.

"A fellow like you, who has read bits of Ruskin without the slightest notion of what he means, hears that a picture is Turner's, and affects to understand it! Why, I tell you it is impossible you can like that picture." I explained humbly that I did not know who painted it, or I would not have presumed. "Presumed!" cried he: "why you have been gazing at it like a man in a dream for half an hour!"

"I beg pardon; I *was* in a sort of dream," I replied. "I meant no harm, but Claudes and Turners have that effect upon me, somehow."

"Ignorant admiration like that is downright profanation," growled my friend; "such works ought not to be exposed to the vulgar gaze."

It would be very nice to understand some of the principles upon which good pictures are distinguished from bad pictures. I have been through heaps and heaps of foreign churches and picture galleries, but I am ashamed to say that I could very seldom manage to extract the slightest pleasure from saints, martyrs, holy families, or the secular or mythological works of the most famous masters. Every now and then, indeed, I have been repaid for any amount of boredom. I do believe that I could go into Antwerp cathedral and gaze upon that Descent from the Cross, day after day, for months, without getting tired of it. It seems to me an inspiration, a miraculous picture.

Without understanding why, the first glance at it told me that the painter was a genius; a man the hem of whose garment one would be proud to touch; something far superior to ordinary humanity; a demigod. And yet I have often looked at Rubens's picture in the Louvre, and at our own Rape of the Sabines, and it would never have occurred to me (if I had not been told), that the painter was a great master. Yet Maule tells me that if I admired the real beauties of the Descent, I could not fail to see those of all other Rubenses; while to me it seems utterly incredible that the two Rubenses I have mentioned should have been painted by the same man. It is evident that a great picture has a double power of pleasing, one appreciable only by the cognoscenti, the other adapted to the comprehension of the vulgar; and why should we not enjoy what has been provided for the gratification of our coarser tastes?

Then there is sculpture. Why should not people be allowed to like marble drapery? Why tell them that the effect of a veiled figure is produced by a mere trick, and that they must not admire it? The poor honest folks have been yawning over naked stone men and women—trying to see the ideal—all their lives, and have failed. Statues have pleased them in a conservatory, because the gleaming white has brought out the green of the orange-trees, but in no other manner. And then they go to Windsor chapel and see the group to the memory of the Princess Charlotte; or they come across some such composition as the Reading Girl, and for the first time get hold of a bit of sculpture they can comprehend, and which gives them real pleasure. Short-lived is their triumph. Some blow-fly of an art-critic is certain to taint their enjoyment. "Pretty in its way. A piece of mechanical work carefully executed; but, my dear fellow, that is not *Art*." Well, but what is it? The Laocoon, doubtless. What percentage of educated travellers can derive pleasure from looking at that? Perhaps if we had casts of works of art which we can understand, dispersed more generally throughout our public gardens and institutions, we might, in a few generations, be educated up to the higher branches. At present, with very few exceptions, the English people are in the position of a boy attending a lecture on mechanics who has not read algebra.

People, again, who admire the most intellectual poetry, never will allow those who prefer an inferior style to rest in peace. It was a common custom some years ago, and may be still, for debating societies to argue upon Byron's pretensions to be called a poet. Yet that was in the true spirit of the Art Tyrant. Thousands of Byron's fellow countrymen might find an artistic want satisfied by his poetry; they never cared for Milton or Pope; they never thought they liked poetry at all, until Byron came in their way, and suited them. Now, because another order of

poetry suits the critic better, why should he spoil the only intellectual delight the Byron lovers have, by perpetually uncovering their idol's clay feet? They listen to the troublesome critic because he is cleverer and better up in the subject than they are, and he abuses his power. The critic himself probably thought Lara the noblest effort of poetical genius in the language, when he was seventeen. If his taste prefer at a later period Shelley, Keats, Wordsworth, Browning, or Tennyson, that is no reason for turning up his nose at his old friend.

But musical tyrants are the worst tyrants, and their slaves are beyond measure the most numerous. Almost every young lady learns music, and a very large number of young men who are fond of the society of young ladies, study it too, in order to ingratiate themselves. All these people might receive pleasure instead of pain from their pursuits, if it were not for the Art Tyranny which forces them to neglect what they like, for something else which a conventional rule asserts that they ought to like. No doubt a man with a refined classical taste gets a very high and intense pleasure out of classical music; but then the ear he has been blessed with, is a very different organ to the ears of the unhappy thousands of his slaves and imitators, who are too vain to own the inferiority of their drums. For me, I own fairly that I loathe good music. I wish I liked it; I wish I liked everything. But I don't like it.

As for talking in a depreciatory tone of that which is too high for my attainment, I repudiate such vain folly, which is the affection of ignorance. The fact is a sad one, that I am so utterly devoid of musical taste, that if I modestly allude to a favourite tune or performer, my classical friends laugh scornfully. And yet a cunning violin or violoncello player can draw the tears to my eyes; some combinations of sounds fill me with awe; others make me long to dance or sing; others to fight; others plunge me into melancholy but pleasing reveries of the past. But nothing which the tyrant artists admit to be music, has this effect upon me; only what they condemn as trash. The Christy Minstrels raise me to paradise; a Sonata in F sends me to the antipodes thereof. Home, Sweet Home, is charming; but the variations upon it excite within me the germs of a canine howl. Why am I a degraded wretch because my drums are so organised? Do not call what I like to listen to, music; call it sweet sound; only let me have it in peace, and do not attempt to force upon me what gives me pain in place of what affords me the keenest pleasure. When I heard Mademoiselle Schneider sing Dites lui, I was distracted by conflicting desires to worship her, eat her, and hear her go on for ever. Offenbach, whom the Art Tyrants would roast at a slow fire if they could, has supplied a want in my life; I feel a personal gratitude to the man who has given me such true and lasting pleasure. Lasting, because in hours of weariness and depression his airs

come back upon my memory, revive and cheer me. Of course if the conventional idea that there is a higher musical law, up to which anybody who is capable of deriving pleasure from sweet sounds at all, can be educated, be correct, I am worthy of blame rather than compassion. This remonstrance is put forward in the belief that myriads of people who enjoy pretty airs could never, with any amount of practice, learn to like classical music; to them *The Last Rose of Summer* would always be delightful, and Thalberg's variations upon it unmeaning noise. I contend that a man can no more give himself a fine ear, than a long sight. But he can do this: he can believe in the tyrants who would raise his taste, and can learn to despise and relinquish what gave him real delight; he can drop the substance of sweet sound and pursue a musical shadow, and be bored by concerts for the rest of his life. And thousands do it. Let us have classical music, and sweetnoiseical entertainments, and live in harmony.

LEAVES FROM THE MAHOGANY TREE.

TABLE FURNITURE (CHINA, GLASS, &C.).

WE have before us while we write, two things: a portfolio of photographs: and that simple, useful, but not very beautiful object, a balanced ivory-handled Sheffield dinner-knife. The steel is good, the blade is constructed on sensible principles, being capable of receiving a fine edge, and being thicker on the back than on the front, and thicker at the bottom than the top; but in point of beauty of form, the implement might be made by a Bosjesman. Nor is this Sheffield dinner-knife altogether framed after even the severest common sense, for it is rounded at the top as if it were intended for a lunatic asylum, and, moreover, the binding of the handle is put on in such a way that it harbours cleaning sand and dust: while the letters of the maker's name, stamped unwisely at the bottom of the blade, also receive their share of the grit and blackness of the knife-board.

Now, this knife in the eyes of a jury of æsthetic epicureans stands arraigned as grossly deficient in several essential points, and its deficiencies represent the great wants of our modern commercial art productions.

The prisoner at the bar—the table-knife of Sheffield—as part of the furniture of our dinner-tables, does not satisfy our craving for the beautiful, nor does it meet the requirement of our less exacting common sense. At the table of a man of taste, everything, even the simplest, should be sensibly adapted to its purpose, and should also be beautiful to the eye. It is no reason, because knives are cheap, and are thrown out by thousands from Sheffield warehouses, that they should be senseless in shape, and ugly in form. It is not impossible to unite the useful and the beautiful. The modest vases of Etruria were beautiful, and the penny lamps of Pompeii were as exquisite in shape as they were judicious in structure. The Sheffield manufacturer may be indifferent himself to

beauty of form or ornament; but that is no reason why he should refuse to meet the demands of the people of taste. He might at least make his knives useful; yet to be useful, a dinner knife should be sharp at the point, because it is not merely the carver who has to sever drumsticks, and penetrate between the interstices of joints.

"But when *were* such things as dinner-knives beautiful?" asks Mr. Sheffield. What can a dinner-knife be, but a steel blade thrust into a square or a round handle? Our answers are ready filed and docketed at our elbow. They are here in our portfolio of photographs from the antiquarian collection of that very practical virtuoso, the great shipbuilder, Robert Napier, Esq. We see before us, photographs of knives, forks, and spoons of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (that is from the reigns of Henry the Eighth to that of Charles the Second), of many countries, but chiefly Italy, France, Germany, and England. They are all beautiful, and are all works of art, though some of them are of such rude materials as box-wood and maple wood. Our first photograph is of a rich crystal fork-spoon, mounted in silver gilt. It perhaps indicates the origin of the fork: a spoon sawn into long teeth, so as in some degree to unite the two purposes of the flesh fork and the spoon. By-the-by there can be no doubt that the rounded top of the dinner knife is a convention dating back to the Queen Anne times, and earlier, when even well-bred people ate with their knives. A page or two further on we find a fork (date 1552, but there is no doubt that forks were used in Italy even at the beginning of the sixteenth century) with an exquisite steel handle embellished with busts of negroes and floriated scrolls. It is contained in an elaborately carved boxwood case, mounted with silver. People carried about their knives and forks then; and at London ordinaries in Fleet-street or near St. Paul's, gallants like Gratiano and Mercutio, fresh from their Venetian tour, would produce such forks from their perfumed doublets, to the wonder, disgust, and amusement of untravelled men. The next example we take up is still more admirable and it comes, indeed, from a skilful hand. It is a Flemish knife handle of the seventeenth century, surmounted by groups of Amorini (the Amorini are pretty allegorical creatures of the Cupid family). It is not only delightful to look at, but it furnishes an excellent grip, and is with reasonable care imperishable. Then we come to a Dutch knife-handle, in boxwood, of the seventeenth century, carved with scriptural subjects in oval medallions; next, to a knife and fork (seventeenth century) with handles of tulips, leaves, and Cupids; next, to a German one with animals gnawing and tearing each other; next, to a Cinque-Cento spoon, with masks, cornucopias, and acanthus leaves; next, to a fine silver knife-handle with niello flowers; lastly, to ivory spoons used by poor mendicant friars of taste, who were forbidden silver. The handles are beautifully carved with little crisp quaint

male and female figures seated underneath a tree. In these matters, then, it really seems we have less taste than the men of the seventeenth century, who could not discover steam, and who never saw a cotton mill in full work.

The phantom voice from Sheffield answers: "Well, they are beautiful; but, Heaven bless your imperfect vision, those knives were individual works of art, and cost gold! They could not throw them out as we do, ten thousand a day." "Granted, fair sir; that is exactly what we are driving at. It is individuality and intellectual work that we want to see on our dinner-tables, and the more of it the better. This very work, reduced gentlewomen and mechanics of talent and originality could produce, and would enjoy producing, thanks to our schools of art, at no very tremendous cost. They would be sure of a good market too."

Apostle spoons are especial favourites of ours. The shape is a sensible one. We sometimes want to sip out of a spoon, not to thrust it bodily into our mouths; besides, a spoon handle adapts itself naturally to purposes of ornamentation. We have a photograph by our side, with a fine German example of the sixteenth century. The bowl is engraved with floral scrolls, and on the stem is a plump little Bacchus bestriding a barrel, and holding a cup and grapes.

Let us pass on to another branch of table furniture—epergnes. The present stereotyped masses of silver vases on palm-trees, or rocks and figures, satisfy no one who knows what good art is. They are unmeaning and conventional; see one, you see all; they are redeemed only by the piles of crimson flushed azaleas and green drooping ferns which adorn them. Far better buy a rare old piece of Palissy, and introduce your flowers on either side of it, or in it, if it be a ewer, a vase, or a small fountain, of that wonderful man's work. It is good to think of such a man, of his heroism and struggles through the rain of contempt and the storms of envy, despised, mocked, contemned, until at last, when he had broken up his very bed and chairs, to feed his greedy and pitiless furnaces, the mould opened and disclosed the secret of new beauty. We turn to some Toulouse photographs for an example of Palissy work that would do for a central epergne at a modern dinner-table, and we almost instantly find one—beautiful in design, rich in ever-glowing colours, original in character, and a chef d'œuvre of the great potter of the sixteenth century. It is a vase about eleven inches high, grounded with that dark-blue transparent enamel in which Palissy delighted. It is indigo without its opaqueness, the early twilight hue of an Italian sky. The body of the vase (the drum as it is technically called) bears on each side a cartouche, with on one side a river nymph reclining, on the other the goddess Flora. Finely modelled masks—it is supposed from the hand of the great sculptor Jean Goujon, who was cruelly shot during the massacre of St. Bartholomew, while at work on a scaffold at the Louvre—occupy the spaces under the spout and the handle; and the intervening spaces are filled with scroll foliage. The sweep-

ing curve of the handle is adorned with a female figure, full of poetry and grace, holding a cornucopia, which twines into the scroll of the handle. Below the spout, is a spirited large grotesque masque, and at the base are raised gadroons.

Now, this is an epergne worthy the table of a gourmet of thought, refinement, and taste; one who wants his eyes, between the courses and during the lulls of talking, to rest, not on mere silver plate and tame conventional figures, but on a production of mind. "But," a melancholy voice of scepticism replies: "but you have selected one of the masterpieces of the pottery of the world; how are men of moderate means to obtain such masterpieces?" Our reply is, that fine bits of Palissy, fit for such purposes, though inferior to the example selected, are easily obtainable if a man have taste and patience.

If we were lucky enough to get a good bit of Palissy ware, well modelled, richly coloured, pleasant to the eye, and suggestive to the mind, we would try and also get a certain number of Palissy fruit and preserve dishes to match. These would not only have more individuality than Dresden or Worcester china, but the relief would be sharper, the tints purer, the design less hackneyed, and the enamel colours and glaze more brilliant. The gay fruit will show all the pleasanter when contrasting with the deep indigo blues and chocolate browns of the French ware. If we had the choice, we would specially select those curious dishes, with rivulets in the centre, and shells and fish, spotted trout and lizards, frogs or efts, all round. Palissy used to search for these creatures in the ponds, brooks, and hazel coverts, round Fontainebleau; and they always show his patient love of nature, his industry, and his skill. He observed their colours, and reproduced them with most laborious care. The olive-green tints of a tench, the golden orange of a perch, the emerald armour of the lizard, the low-toned greenish greys of a miller's thumb—he took note of them all, and toiled at the furnace mouth until the stubborn clay glowed with the transmitted dyes. These Palissy dishes are quaint, but they are never repulsive, and, half hidden with fruit and vine leaves, would just sufficiently attract and rouse the attention, without too much occupying it. We have before us, photographs of two such dishes—the one has a translucent brook flowing round the bottom, while on an island in the centre are fish, shells, and pebbles. On the broad sloping bank of the margin, crawl one or two lizards; there, also lurk a coiled-up snake and a frog. The plants the artist has moulded, are ferns, ivy, oak leaves, and acorns.

In the second dish, the central island is studded with cockle shells, which are surrounded by a circle of small univalves. At each end is a large frog. In the circular rivulet disport a pike, two carp, and a miller's thumb: while on the raised border, artfully grouped, are two large lizards, two crayfish, a

frog, and a death's head moth, besides leaves and shells. Now, these objects coarsely executed and awkwardly placed by a dull workman, with no heart in his business, would be simply detestable. They would be stupid assertions of natural facts and so many incongruous and sometimes repelling objects stuck on a piece of pottery; but they are not so in Palissy's work. There, they come like glimpses of outer-world nature, and we seem when using his ware to be taking our fruit and conserves under the sunny green trees of a Boccaccio garden. The chief objection to using Palissy is that it is so precious, and so fragile, and it would be dangerous to entrust it to servants. We grant this, and we would remove this danger by mounting the Palissy plates in copper, and rendering their breakage almost impossible.

Men of fortune we would advise, when possible, to return, for dinner and dessert services, to some of those fine old styles of pottery that never can become obsolete. For instance, if Palissy appear to them too quaint, let them use Majolica. Many of our readers, not versed in antiquities, may not know the story of Majolica. It is a ware originally made by the Moors when they occupied Majorca, and it was exported into Italy from thence and from the potteries of the Spanish Arabs. About the middle of the fifteenth century, the Italians, probably aided by Italian workmen, began to make this beautiful ware for themselves, and soon the manufactures of Faenza, Urbino, Castel-Durante, Gubbio, and Pesaro, became eminent for these iridescent plates—for which it was long supposed, in England, that Raphael, when young, had drawn designs. In due course, thanks to the patronage of the Italian princes, a great man arose, one Maestro Giorgio, a gentleman of Pavia, who about 1498 came to Gubbio, and either bought or succeeded to a manufactory that had the monopoly of the famed ruby lustre, the secret of which is now lost. Maestro Giorgio improved the yellow lustre into the golden, and purified the ruby from its previous orange tone. There is no discovering when ware like this was first made. It was probably one of the primeval discoveries. Mr. Layard found white enamelled pottery with lustre designs ten or twelve feet under the surface of ruins at Khorsabad.

These Majolica plates and dishes are often adorned with copies of Raphael's designs or fragments from Marc Antonio. Often they are what is called "amatoria," or love offerings. One, before us now, has an Amorino upon it, holding an eel which is sliding through his fingers, and the motto is, "Così fugge la vita nostra"—"So flies our life." In another there is a female bust portrait in profile, with a motto, "Chi a tempo non dorma." On the lady's sleeve is the device of a burning heart bound round with a cord, the whole executed entirely in ruby lustre, with blue outline and shading. Often in the centre of these plates Andromeda cries to Heaven from her rocky prison, or Mutius Scaevola thrusts his bold hand

into the flames. In the early periods, the yellow lustre, though dull in colour, has an extraordinary mother-of-pearl iridescence which is exquisitely beautiful. On these lovers' offerings—costly valentines of the sixteenth century—the usual emblems are the old common-place hearts pierced with daggers and darts. The arms of Urbino often appear upon them (these pieces of painted clay have survived the lovers and the princes who caused them to be made), and often they literally glow with ducal coronets, arabesques, warring dragons, intertwined serpents, sphinxes, masks, military and musical trophies, garlands, and inscribed cartouches, all radiant with gold and flame colour. After such ware as this, our common dinner-plates, with blue and maroon edges and a coat of arms or crest in the centre, or maybe a bunch of flowers or a timid landscape, appear very mean and pitiful.

And now we come to glass, which can never be too thin or too tasteful. Claret and Burgundy should be drunk out of air bubbles, if possible; while, on the contrary, ale should be brought round in massive silver-lidded jugs of grey Flemish stoneware. All wealthy men who are collectors we would advise, if they have Venetian glass, to use it—if not, at least to decorate with it safe places round the epergne. Most of our readers have seen Venetian glass of the sixteenth century, though some, perhaps, have not given it much attention. Let us recapitulate a few of its beauties and its claims as an art-decoration for the dinner-tables of men of taste.

It is supposed that old Venetian glass was partly an imitation of antique examples, and partly an imitation of the enamelled glass of the East. They seldom cut it on the wheel, but obtained its extreme tenacity and beautiful curves by blowing only. It is generally allowed that Venetian glass evinces greater originality and beauty of form than any we can now make. The skill of the Italian workmen of Henry the Eighth and Elizabeth's reign seems little short of miraculous. No wonder that that old Italian goblet, "The Luck of Eden Hall," was supposed to be the work of fairies! Some old Venetian glasses have, in the long slender columns of their transparent stems, cross threads of an opaque milk-white colour (Latticino). These, twine like the roots of hyacinth bulbs through their transparent prison, as if they were growing tendrils. Often, this network of white threads is crossed into a lattice or lace-work pattern (Vitro di Trino), and between each lozenge a little shining air bubble has been artfully left.

Then there is the Millefiori (thousand flowers), when the glass is richly variegated with stars, circles, and other geometric fantasies, produced by mingling small cylindrical pieces of various coloured fligree glass, cut from thin rods, with the colourless melted glass of the mass. The Schmelze, too, is beautiful, with its agate-like colours, variegated brown, green, or blue, which, when seen by transmitted light, assume a deep blood-red tinge. Last, but most beauti-

ful of all, we must mention the Schmelze-avanturine, when patches or globules of gold vein the blue and brown surface of the Schmelze, while in the Avanturine, in the melted glass of which levigated leaf gold or metallic filings have been mixed, sparkles of gold are suspended in the glass. Sometimes, Venetian glass is of a smoky brown, or has a blackish tinge, which connoisseurs admire as they do the coffee-colour of old lace. The latter glass has often the fillets, margins, or entire stems, coloured; or it is decorated with bands and fillets of imbricated work in gold, pearl, or jewel enamel. Not unfrequently, a shield of arms is enamelled in the centre of the bowl of the tazza, or there are medallions of classical subjects. We have seen Venetian glass frosted; now and then it takes the vivacious form of a ship, rigging, masts, and all complete; we have seen it spring into leaping chimeras, dragons, and winged monsters.

There were no bounds to the vigorous and original genius of those old glass-workers in that beautiful city by the sea. They enchanted the glass; they made their wine-glasses like nautilus shells, with wings of blue. We remember a lobster with blue claws, glasses with syphons inside the bowls, and tiny stems crocketed all the way up with little coloured ornamental spikes, and red and white flowers in the stem. Such glasses are sometimes, but not always, fragile, and they might often be brought on by the host himself for Tokay, or any specially rare wine. After having been used, admired, and discussed, they might be removed to a place of safety, and next day washed by the lady of the house with her own fair hands.

At the end of the second course, a certain luxurious alderman used always to call for "a cold chair," and upon that fell to at the feast with renewed vigour. Now, there is much more to be said about chairs than we have room to say. The Voltaire chair, the curule chair, the old Venetian chair, the pseudo-classical chair of the First Consulate, with gilt legs; the old splay-legged Queen Anne chair, the wide-backed Molière chair; all have their admirers; but they are nearly all deficient in some one or more essentials of beauty and comfort. Some have not back enough, some have too much, some feel insecure, others are too cumbersome. A good dining-room chair should be portable and yet substantial; the seat neither too soft nor too hard; the back firm and supporting; it should move on casters, so as to roll quickly and without labour. There should be no hard wooden ornaments at the back to cut one's coat and hurt one's spinal vertebrae. It should be graceful in form and yet also cozy. Away with the old conventions of upholsterers, the absurd lions' feet, the wearisome leg ornaments, the everlasting acanthus leaves! Can no fresh type be invented?

Table linen should always be studied. Nothing can be better of its kind than the old Dutch linen, with quaint figures of the old Duke of Marlborough sort of generals, worked

in a shade of white that only shows in certain lights.

We want more mind about our table furniture. If we must have few ideas, let them be repetitions of some fine type, like the Greek chair, the Greek tripod lamp, or the Greek amphora—let them be at least repetitions of beauty, not of dulness and ugliness. By all means use fine works of antiquity when practicable. The beautiful always assimilates, and Palissy and Majolica dishes would not lose, even by contrast with Sèvres plates. Buy harlequin suits; the variety is always pleasant. Designs from Raphael are more intellectual than barbaric wealth of mere gold or silver plate. Besides, metal is not pleasant to eat off. What we want in England is, not to produce a few masterpieces of art every year, but a better average of the ordinarily manufactured art articles. Mr. Cole did good work in this direction, but there is a vast deal still to do before a man of taste of the present day can dine surrounded by plates, cups, dishes, and glasses of beautiful shape and colour.

This deficiency ought not to exist. Our wealth is great, and our countrymen who have taste as well as means are numerous. The demand for tasteful table furniture is great. If our workmen cannot invent, let them imitate. In the fifteenth century, men had time to think, and patience to execute—they had love for their work, and spared no labour in thinking it out. Labour costs more now, but there are plenty who will pay labour. If material be dear, there are plenty who can afford to buy material. But there must be far more education of the eye, or people will still abound who will wish for nothing more beautiful than willow plates, stucco cornices, and tea-tray landscapes.

AT A LITTLE DINNER-PARTY.

FIRST OLD HUMBUG.

DEAR brother Brown, if we could take,
Such liberty with Time,
As just to back his fatal clock
To mark our early prime,
When we were barely twenty-three,
And prodigal of Youth,
And thought all women were divine,
All men the souls of truth:—
If we could feel as then we felt,
And know what now we know,
We'd take more pleasure than we did,
Twice twenty years ago.

SECOND OLD HUMBUG.

DEAR Brother Smith, I'm not so sure,
'Tis heart that keeps us young,
And heart was ever ignorant,
Since Eve and Adam sprang.
And if we knew in youthful days
As much as when we're old,
I fear that heart would turn to stone,
And blood run very cold.
Yet none the less, for sake of life,
Though life should bring me woe,
I'd gladly be the fool I was
Twice twenty years ago.

THIRD OLD HUMBUG.

Dear Smith and Brown, of parted hours
 Your talk is void and vain,
 They're gone—God wot! Let's bless our lot!
 They cannot come again.
 Each age has its appointed joy,
 And each its heavy load,
 And I for one would not retrace
 My footsteps on the road.
 I know no Time, but present Time,
 And if the claret flow—
 And we enjoy it—why recall
 Twice twenty years ago?

I know I've had my share of joy,
 I know I've suffered long,
 I know I've tried to do the right,
 Although I've done the wrong.
 I know 'mid all my pleasures past,
 That sleep has been the best,
 And that I'm weary, very weary,
 And soon shall be at rest.
 Yet all the same I cling to life,
 "To be" is all I know,
 And if I'm right, I knew no more,
 Twice twenty years ago.

THE YOUNG HUMBUG.

You dear old humbugs, Jones and Smith,
 Thou dear old humbug, Brown,
 You live like oysters, though not half
 So useful to the town.
 I'll lead a nobler life than yours,
 While yet my youth remains,
 And gather up a store of gold
 To heal old Age's pains.
 You've had your pleasures as you went
 In dribblets small and thin,
 I'll have my pleasures in the lump,
 And end where you begin.
 I'll carve and care, I'll stint and spare,
 And heap up sum on sum,
 To make myself a millionaire
 Before old Age shall come.
 I'll flaunt the rich, I'll feed the poor,
 And on the scroll of Fame,
 So large that all the world may read,
 I'll write my honest name!

CHORUS OF OLD HUMBUGS.

Yes! Fool! and when you're old as we,
 You'll find, on verge of death,
 That little pleasures are the best,
 And Fame—not worth a breath.

IN SEVILLE.

I was in Seville a few weeks ago, when Isabella still was Queen. A traveller's first impression in Seville is that of being perpetually stared at. In the streets, at the theatres, in the churches, at the Mesa rodonda (table d'hôte), it is all the same. Spanish politeness seems to have gone the way of Spanish debentures; a stranger who is inclined for a lounge will attract about the same amount of respectful attention as a giraffe taking the air in the Strand. A good wholesome English beard is the thing of all others to excite wrath; it would be less conspicuous,

perhaps, to wear a tail. The full-grown beard of Britain is too nearly allied to the Moorish or Israelitish appendage to be tolerated by orthodox believers, who shave off the whiskers, and trim the hair on the chin to a fine Vandyke point. An Englishman with a white beard was not long ago pelted in one of the squares of Seville. That city is very sensitive also on the subject of bonnets, or ladies' hats. It would be about as safe to wear a Moorish turban. Probably, it is only intended as a tribute of respect to the national Mantilla, that fashionably dressed young men stand still and laugh aloud, as an English lady passes by.

Whether the tired traveller will sleep at night in Seville, depends upon the view he may take of street noises. If he has gone through a preparatory course of having chain-cables hauled over his berth on board ship, he may possibly be soothed to rest by mule-bells, which are like tin-kettles with stones in them, and the rattle whereof is incessant. Mellowed by the distance of a mile or so, the sound may have a charm; but it certainly is not to be discovered when it is continued all night immediately under your bedroom window.

The watchmen too, are very obliging. They prowl about with halberds and lanterns, and insist upon telling you the time every half-hour, accompanying their intimation by a prolonged howl, which is supposed to be "Ave Maria purissima," and so on. By about three A.M. the church bells are stirring. These instruments of torture are suspended to a beam which revolves on pivots, and the bell is pushed by a man, like a swing, and turns over and over, ringing as it goes. So, between mule-bells on the earth, and church bells in the sky, the traveller may improve his sleepless nights by extending his acquaintance with campanology.

If the people of Seville be dirty, it is their own fault, for the town abounds in excellent and well arranged baths. The only difficulty is in getting the water cold. You state your wishes, the attendant shrugs his shoulders and, while your back is turned, secretly lets a quantity of hot water in, under the impression that you are mad, and that no created constitution could survive the shock of a cold bath.

A visit to the correo, or post-office, for the purpose of despatching a foreign letter, is rather an exhilarating operation. A knock at the inquiry window produces a lean and smoke-dried individual, who, on learning the destination of the letter, explains how much the postage will amount to. The window in question is barred with a close iron grating, and the general air of the place is that of a rather disreputable prison. If the window bars are intended as a precaution against felony, they would seem superfluous, for a comprehensive view of the interior reveals nothing to steal, except the hungry-looking clerk himself, and an enormous deal counter. The next process is to ascertain that the letter does not exceed the

prescribed weight. This is done by slowly depositing it in a pair of scales large enough to try a jockey's weight at Epsom. The destination and weight of the letter having been ascertained, the next thing is to get stamps for the requisite amount; but this is rather a complicated business. The post-office does not sell stamps, so the hungry clerk explains in pantomime—for the traveller's Spanish is not up to conversation mark—and points in a distracted way towards the cigar he is smoking. The good-natured traveller, thinking that the official in question might be seized with a sudden frenzy for tobacco, makes a polite tender of his cigar-case. A cigar is accepted, but still the stamps are not forthcoming. A gloomy suspicion crosses the traveller's mind that the clerk is mad, so he goes back to his hotel and consults a waiter, who explains that the object of all the pantomime was to refer the traveller to a tobaccoist's shop, since it is to that particular branch of trade that a paternal government has entrusted the privilege of selling postage stamps. If this arrangement causes a little trouble, it is not without its direct advantage to the revenue, for tobacco is a royal monopoly, and, as a man who buys a stamp, may, in the process of negotiation deem it advisable to buy a cigar too, this innocent little device is productive of benefit to the ruling powers. On arriving at the shop, the traveller is confronted by a solemn man in a mulberry cloak and black turban hat. The customer's wants are politely explained, and the old gentleman gruffly desires to see the letter. He first poises it upon a pair of very dirty fingers, and then with a growing sense of responsibility, weighs it in some snuffy scales. This operation concluded, he finds it necessary to light a fresh cigar. He next adjusts his spectacles and struggles manfully through every word of the address. This done, he turns the letter over and over, either in a sort of forlorn hope of getting at the inside, or with the more innocent intention of disposing of a little of his spare time, and maybe driving his customer to take refuge in cigars. He then dives into the inmost recesses of a drawer, and very slowly, and, to all appearance reluctantly, produces a stamp. Off the traveller goes in triumph with his letter to the post-office. It is sure to be all right now: but no. The old gentleman has given you a wrong stamp. And, as no letters can pass through a Spanish post-office which are not paid in full, you are obliged to go back again. At last you get your letter off. And, if you be wise, you make a vow that you will write no more letters as long as you remain in Spain.

The process of receiving letters is nearly as complicated as that of despatching them, for the Spaniards have devised a pleasant little plan, by means of which you may get your neighbour's letters quite as easily as your own. You call at the *Poste Restante*, and are referred to a long row of frames hanging round the outside of the building. These turn out, on inspection,

to be lists of letters lying inside for identification. The name alone is given, and as it is nearly always wrongly spelt, and as the traveller has several dozens of names from which to make his selection, the process affords scope for willing away a little time, and exercising ingenuity in deciphering hieroglyphics. Each name has a number prefixed, so the traveller presents himself at the inquiry window with a demand for number so and so. If his Spanish numerals be shady, he gets somebody else's property; but if he make an intelligible demand, he will get his own letter; always supposing that it has been correctly numbered, and that no one has been to fetch it before him.

Having gone through a course of post-office discipline, the sojourner in Seville will have qualified himself for the still more arduous and exciting task of money-changing. Having been duly informed by his London bankers that they have advised a certain sum of money to his credit at the house of their correspondent at Cadiz, he writes to have it sent on to their agents at Seville. He hears that this has been done, and then, if he have been brought up in Lombard-street notions of punctuality and despatch, he fondly imagines he has nothing to do but call and get it. He does call, and, if his patience hold out, he does get it—at last; but the process is something like the following:

The agent is a merchant, who cannot, or will not, speak any language but his own, and, as his mouth is temporarily engaged with a monster Havannah, he is not inclined to speak more than he can help, even of that. A quarter of an hour or so is occupied in catching a polyglot clerk, who expounds the business to his principal. It does not appear to be to his taste, for he draws a cheque in a very sulky way, and, without bestowing a look on the traveller, betakes himself to his newspaper. The next thing is to find the particular bank indicated on the cheque. The aid of a cabman is invoked, who naturally enough drives his unfortunate fare to every bank except the right one. When he does discover it, he discovers also that it is the festival of St. Isidore, or St. Somebody else of local celebrity, and that no business is transacted on that day. He notes the name of the street, and resolves to put in an appearance in the morning.

Spaniards, as a rule, are averse to cash payments, when paper will answer as well: so the production of the cheque is followed by a tender of a bundle of notes. It is by no means unlikely that some of these may belong to banks which have stopped payment for six months; and as the traveller has his own misgivings concerning the soundness of Spanish credit, he begs to be accommodated with gold. This proposal appears to operate prejudicially on the clerk's nervous system, for he puts his shoulders and arms through a series of complicated movements, emblematical of wonder and dismay,

and clenches the matter by a solemn declaration that there is no gold in the bank, and that the traveller must take the notes or nothing. With dismal reflections on the state of Spanish finance, he wends his way back to the merchant's office. His appearance is the signal for a burst of virtuous indignation. Does he expect, that honest citizen wishes to know, that they are going to coin money for his especial benefit? Why does he not take what he can get, and be thankful, as better men have been before him? Having restored his mind to comparative tranquillity by this well-timed piece of sarcasm, it seems to occur to the merchant that his customer ought to have something for his letter of credit beyond foul words and surly looks, so he proceeds to explain in somewhat blander tones that there really is a remarkable dearth of gold in the town just now, but that he thinks he knows where gold may be bought. So the clerk of many languages is in requisition once more, and accompanies the traveller to divers dingy dens, bearing a suspicious resemblance to the abode of money lenders of the Jewish persuasion. Having now consumed the greater part of two days in the simple process of getting a cheque for fifty pounds changed, and seeing no reasonable prospect of turning it into cash, without leaving ever so much per cent. in the hands of these town-bred brigands, the traveller rushes off to the merchant's office with his blood at boiling point, and delivers himself in his native tongue of sentiments that would rather startle the man of business, if he could in the least comprehend them. The traveller winds up by tearing the cheque to pieces. The merchant begins to think that matters have gone too far, and that his London correspondents may not be altogether flattered by his reception of their letter of credit; so, almost as soon as the infuriated Briton has reached his hotel, the polyglot clerk makes his appearance with many bows and smiles, and states that, by making superhuman exertions, his master has been enabled to scrape the money together, and that if the traveller will have the kindness to draw a fresh cheque, he is ready to count out the gold on the table. Left to his own reflections once more, the traveller perceives that Andalusia is not a favourable region for the speedy conducting of banking operations.

Hotels in Seville are good and reasonable. As a rule they are kept by foreigners, Italians or French; for the Spaniard still clings fondly to his notion of what an hotel ought to be—a place where you and your horse may sleep, with the privileges of a common fire for cooking any provisions you may chance to have brought with you.

Communication with foreign nations has done much to destroy this national institution, and the result is, that in southern Spain, board and lodging may be obtained for less than would be demanded in most parts of France or Germany. In Seville, for example, first-floor apartments

are to be rented in an hotel which commands a view of one of the most fashionable thoroughfares, at the rate of two dollars a day for an adult, and one dollar for children. This includes two capital meals at the table d'hôte, with a fair proportion of inferior wine. Most reasonable people would be content with this, when it is remembered that a Spanish breakfast is almost a dinner, or rather an early luncheon, and, besides meat and pastry, winds up with dessert. A repetition of this meal at five or six o'clock will be quite as much as most digestions can safely undertake. But, if the bill of fare be princely in its dimensions, there are one or two drawbacks to a public meal which render a less sumptuous repast in private more to the taste of travellers with English-bred notions of politeness. In the first place every Spaniard smokes. Meet him when and where you will, there is the inevitable cigar. So he is pretty sure to bring it in to dinner with him, and the smallest delay between the courses finds him puffing away with such vigour as to make a stranger wonder whether, for some unknown cause, the dinner is being served in the smoking-room of the establishment. In the next place, Spaniards seem to suffer from colds and bronchial affections to a most alarming extent. A priest at the altar, an actor on the stage, a man of fashion at the club, your next neighbour at the table d'hôte, perform such prodigies of expectoration as can only result from the chronic derangement of the national mucous membrane. Bating these little peculiarities, there is nothing to hinder an enjoyable meal.

The bedroom is sure to be cool, for houses and streets are so constructed as to keep out as much sunshine as possible. Some of the streets have wires drawn across from house to house, over which canvas is spread during the heat of the day; and, as many of the shopkeepers dispense with window-fronts, and allow their goods to lie exposed in tempting profusion, the sensation is like that of walking through a gigantic fancy fair. There are three things to be noted in streets devoted to private residences: First, that all the houses have projecting windows from the first floor to the top. This gives much the same sort of character to a house that a good nose does to a human face, and is a most pleasing relief after the dull monotony of an English terrace. The effect is further enhanced by the framework being painted in all kinds of bright colours, according to the taste of the owner. Secondly, in place of a solid street door there is always an iron gate, tastefully wrought in filagree work, and affording a most captivating glimpse of the marble court, or patio, with its fountain in the centre, and orange-trees and heliotropes grouped around. Thirdly, the windows on the ground and first floor are furnished with stout iron bars, raising an unpleasant suspicion that burglaries must be of very common occurrence in Seville, or that a somewhat unreasonable portion of the city is de-

voted to sponging-house accommodation. The custom, however, is not altogether due to fear of thieves, but to fear of intrigue. Spanish ladies not being allowed to see their lovers with as much freedom as among ourselves, make up for the restriction by private assignations. Two or three unpolite proverbs are in existence as to the amount of vigilance that should be exercised over women; and the iron bars in question are the proverbs put into practice.

If asked what is the most prominent feature of ordinary street life in Seville—as I saw it before the present Revolution—the unhesitating answer would be, soldiers. Supposing that other towns are as liberally supplied with defenders as the capital of Andalusia, her most Catholic majesty must needs have had a good-sized army. Anticipations of a pronunciamiento on a small scale may help, on occasion, to swell the Seville garrison to a portentous size; but the every-day aspect of the city is enough to drive a stranger into a frenzy of perplexity, if he begin to think where all the swarms of soldiers come from—how they are paid and fed—and what they do for their money. The last thing at night and the first thing in the morning there they are, prowling about in pairs: lean, and gaunt, and hungry. Waspish waists and an air of faded gentility are the characteristics of the officers. If ribands and decorations be any sign of valour, most of them must be perfect lions in fight. An unprejudiced observer might be inclined to think that a little more bone and muscle would not detract from their warlike capacities; but what they want in height of body they make up in length of sword. Privates, as well as officers, wear their side arms at all hours of the day and night—an arrangement that helps to swell the list of cutting and wounding for which Seville is deservedly renowned.

A timely notice placarded in the patio of the hotel announces that on such and such an evening, Señor Somebody, with his company of ladies and gentlemen, will execute all the favourite national dances. The payment of a dollar by a stranger, and of a quarter of that sum by a more highly favoured native, introduces the visitor into a long and dreary room, along the sides of which are seated rows of gloomy-looking individuals, who appear to be awaiting the commencement of business, with the amount of cheerfulness usually manifested by patients in a dentist's ante-room. The entrance of four women in short petticoats, and the same number of men in preternaturally tight small-clothes—each of them a dancer of renown—fails to arouse the company from its abject despondency. But as the mysteries of the dance begin to unfold themselves with a grace and dignity that leave all conceivable ballets at a hopeless distance, it turns out that most of the grim spectators have castanets concealed beneath their cloaks. As the pulse begins to quicken, the castanets begin to play; first feebly, then loudly, then madly. Some banjo-like guitars

catch the enthusiasm and set up a twanging that speaks well for the strength of cat-gut. The whole is crowned by a general stamping of feet, in the midst of which half a dozen or so of the spectators fling off their cloaks, rush into the midst of the dance and display an activity and vigour which are only to be surpassed by their professional brethren. Is it pretty? somebody may ask. That depends upon taste. The figures of the dancers are graceful beyond all words; but the din of the castanets, and the general uproar are calculated to interfere with enjoyment. In the open air, and with plenty of space at command, the performance would be charming enough, but none save the strongest nerves ought to try the experiment under a roof.

It is difficult to decide whether Spanish Theatres are to be classed as places of entertainment, or whether they should not be regarded as partaking of the nature of a severe penitential discipline. The air of depression that pervades the audience, and the absence of anything which could be interpreted as a symptom of enjoyment, would favour the last supposition. The men shroud themselves in their cloaks, and lapse into a state of coma. The women telegraph with their fans to favoured acquaintances, and pay as much attention to the play as they do to the admonitions of their duennas. Tragedy, in an unlimited number of acts, seems most in vogue, and best harmonises with the woebegone aspect of the audience. A prompter is enconced in a little box in the middle of the foot-lights, as in France and Italy, and as he not only reads every word of the play in a key that is audible half over the house, but tells the actors where to stand, and what to do, the interest of the drama does not flag from the audience not knowing what is to come next. The one advantage of theatre-going (next to a pretty and well ventilated house) is that, judging by time, full equivalent is given for your money. An uniform charge is made for admission, but this must be supplemented by a further sum, varying according to the part of the house that is chosen. The entire outlay need not exceed two shillings.

There is one impression that a stranger can hardly fail to bring away from the theatre, which is, that Spanish ladies are the best gloved women in the world. And so they ought to be, when, besides the natural advantage of well shaped hands, they make glove buying part of the serious business of life. A Seville glove shop is a curiosity. The counter is adorned with a row of small cushions, the probable use of which gives rise to a variety of wild conjectures on the part of a stranger. These are intended for ladies' elbows to rest upon, while the shop assistants (always men) pull the gloves on for them. No lady would dream of fitting herself with gloves, any more than with shoes. As señoras rather pique themselves upon not wearing the same gloves more than once, the glove-fitting operation has to be often repeated. Whenever a row of women

are seen undergoing the operation, the picture is sure to be garnished with a fringe of admiring cavaliers.

THE PURCHASE SYSTEM.

A TALE.

"THERE Milly! Never say I was not born under a lucky star," cried Frank Chester, bursting into his young wife's room, and triumphantly putting a paper into her hand.

The paper contained the official intimation to Lieutenant Chester, that on the sum of eleven hundred pounds being lodged in the agent's hands, he would be gazetted to a captain's commission in his regiment.

"Why, Frank," said Milly, after reading it, "you'll be a captain after all, then? Oh, you dear old boy!" The little woman laid her hands upon his shoulders and gazed into his face with such a proud and happy look in her great blue eyes, that Frank could do nothing less than be suddenly very spooney and sentimental indeed—because she was.

A tall broad-shouldered young fellow of six-and-twenty, was this same Frank Chester, with a mass of crisp light curls climbing over his broad forehead, in utter ignorance of a parting, and bursting out everywhere into mutiny against being trimmed short after military fashion.

Some two years before, while these curls were on a visit at a country parson's, they had won the heart of Milly, youngest daughter of the house. After a short and happy engagement, the pair had been married: Frank bearing his little wife away to his regiment in India, much to the sorrow of the parsonage, where it was said that the sun never went down as long as Milly was in the house. After a couple of years spent in India, the young couple had returned to England with the regiment, and were, at the time now in question, quartered in a garrison town not far from London.

Owing to several men above him having left or exchanged on the return of the regiment, Frank Chester had found himself "first for purchase for his company" some time before he had expected it.

"And now, Milly," said Frank, "the next thing is to arrange about the money. I've been adding up, and we've just got the regulation price—that's eleven hundred pounds, you know; but I've promised Esdale, whose step I get, to give six hundred more, and that's what troubles me, you see. I don't like running into debt, and yet we can't afford not to purchase."

"But, Frank," urged Milly, "why do you give the six hundred pounds then? If you haven't got it, why can't you tell Captain Esdale so, and pay the regulation price only?"

"Because if I did, Milly, Esdale would exchange at once, and the step would be lost. Besides, it's the custom of the Service. And I can always get the money back."

"Yes, dearest; but it seems such a dreadful thing to be in debt, and for such a large sum.

Why, it's nearly as much as the price of the company!"

"Oh, as to that, it's thought rather cheap by our fellows. There's Shilson the other day gave nine hundred, and Ramsay, of the Hundred and Tenth is offering a thousand, and can't get any one to take it; so there's nothing against my getting as much when I sell out. After all, it's as broad as it's long, Milly."

"But still, Frank, it does seem so horrid to be in debt and not able to pay it. Why can't we wait, and not purchase? We are very comfortable as we are; and though I'd rather see you a captain than anything, still, don't you think, Frank, we can't afford it?"

"My dear little woman, you don't understand these things, and you never will. I might be ten or twelve years before I got my company, without purchase, and all the while every youngster in the regiment would be going over my head, one after another. I couldn't stand it, Milly; besides, I can exchange out again, and get three or four hundred for that."

"And have to go out to India again? Oh, Frank, we couldn't do it, and the baby only a year old, and it never was well out there. Don't do that, there's a darling."

The blue eyes filled up again, and would not be comforted until Frank promised that he would not exchange, and that the baby should not go out to India again.

He lighted a cigar, and turning out of his pretty little garden, strolled across to the mess.

"Well, captain, how are you?" said a youngster, as he came in. "You are a lucky fellow. I only wish I had your chance. Why, you're under seven years' service, and Travers has thirteen, and not an idea of his company."

Travers was the senior lieutenant, and had been half way up the list when Chester joined as a boy; but not being for purchase, Frank was now going to pass over his head, as several had done before him.

Frank turned away to a side table strewn with letters, and, picking out three or four directed to himself, began to open them.

The first enclosed a card:

Mr. T. Robinson,

8, Wessex-street, Strand, W.C.

On the other side, neatly printed in running-hand, was the following:

"If you are in want of money, I will give you ninety pounds for your bill for one hundred pounds at six months, or I will lend you money at five per cent on security."

The second, ornamented with a staring red monogram, was a lithographed letter as follows:

"Sir. Hearing confidentially from a third party that you are trying to raise money on your own security, I write to inform you that I am prepared to supply you with the needful, to any amount, on your own note of hand, at a low rate of interest, and at any time you may require it. No fees. Bills not renegotiated. The strictest confidence observed. No con-

nexion with any of the advertising fraternity.—
Yours obediently,

“NATHANIEL LEVI, &c. &c.”

The third enclosed a neatly-printed pamphlet, emanating from the “Military, Naval, Civil, and Volunteer Loan and Discount Agency Company, Limited,” and was entitled, “Hints to Borrowers.” It contained some twenty pages of advice to these unfortunates as to the various kinds of securities available, together with the best way of negotiating them, and wound up with a strong recommendation of the “Military, Naval, &c., Company, Limited,” as a means for forwarding such transactions.

These letters being a fair sample of what Chester and every officer in his regiment had been receiving daily since their return to England, it is not surprising that our intending borrower did not jump at the very promising offers they contained.

A step sounded on the staircase, and Esdale, the officer whose company Frank was about to purchase, strolled in.

“How d’you do, Esdale?”

“How are you, Chester? More accommodating friends, I see; what is it this time?”

“The old story,” replied Frank. “But seriously, Esdale, I want to go to one of these fellows for your six hundred, till I can raise the money elsewhere, and I don’t know how to set about it.”

“The easiest thing in the world, my dear boy; go up to old Leverson, Cavendish-court; I’ll give you my card, and he’ll let you have it without any fuss, and you may be sure he won’t send your paper flying all over town for want of an owner. I’ve had hundreds from him, and never found him wanting yet.”

“How about interest?” asked Frank, cautiously.

“Oh, anything from five to fifty per cent, I fancy; but that won’t be much, for I suppose you’ll exchange, and get the money that way.”

“Well, yes. I—I suppose I shall,” said Frank, put ill at ease with himself by the recollection of Milly at home, and his promise touching the baby.

It was not until night that Frank told his wife what had passed between him and Esdale, and announced his intention to go up to town by the morning train, and see Mr. Leverson personally.

Cavendish-court was not easily found next day, when he went up to London by early train. It was a dingy smoke-dyed lane lying somewhere near Charing-cross, between the railway terminus and Whitehall; Mr. Leverson’s abode was the dingiest and most smoke-dyed house in the court; and, as Frank knocked, he could not help wondering how a capitalist of such means as Mr. Leverson could condescend to inhabit such a place. However, the door opening, cut his wonder short, and finding from the sallow undersized boy who answered his knock, that the capitalist was within, he entered a dingy office containing a high desk, ink-stained, and strewn

with papers, an old almanac, a print of Martin’s Last Day, and as dirty a window as Frank had ever seen.

Leaving him in this unpromising room, the boy disappeared through a second door; then reappeared with the request that Frank would walk in, as Mr. Leverson was quite at leisure.

Frank had pictured to himself a thin, pinched, querulous old man, with one hand on a cheque book and one leg in the grave, who would screw him down to the lowest point, or pay one-half his advance in bad pictures or worse wines. Mr. Leverson was a stout hearty man of some forty years of age, with a rosy face dimpled into a continual smile; slightly bald, but with what hair he had, carefully made the most of; he was dressed in plain grey, and wore no rings, chains, or any of the jewellery conventionally associated with the persons of money-lenders.

He was seated in a comfortable arm chair by the side of a handsome secretaire. A bird was hanging in the window; several cheap engravings, prettily framed, ornamented the walls, which were covered with a paper all rose buds and trellis work.

On Frank’s entrance he rose, and cordially held out his hand, pushing a chair forward opposite his own, and smiling as if he had known, and had been expecting, Chester all his life.

“From Captain Esdale—one of my oldest and best friends,” he began, reading the card which Frank handed to him. “And how, may I ask, did you leave Captain Esdale, sir? In good health, I trust, as usual?”

“Yes, I believe, much as usual,” answered Frank; “he recommended me to you as—”

“Ah! exactly so,” interrupted the capitalist, smiling in the greatest good humour, “the captain always remembers his friends. What deliciously warm weather! Quite summery for April, and prospects of a magnificent harvest, sir!”

Frank assented: not that he knew much, or cared much, about the harvest just then.

“Are you making a long stay in London, Mr. Chester? Good name; very good name. Any connexion of General Chester?”

“Only distantly—a connexion, nothing more. We have but few relatives living, and they are abroad.”

“I see, sir. In India I presume? Charming country! And the pay so good too there. Quite an elysium for young officers, I am told.”

Frank hadn’t found it exactly an elysium, but he said nothing to the contrary. “Everything depends on this fellow’s being in a good humour,” he thought. So he merely assented with a laugh, and tried to bring the conversation round to the matter nearest his heart.

“I called to see you, Mr. Leverson——” he began, blushing.

“What ever you want, you know. No questions. A small temporary accommodation. I hear the winner of the Derby stands at sixty to one; capital chance to make a good thing. What shall I say, twenty, fifty, a hundred? Say the

word, Mr. Chester; as a friend of Captain Esdale's, three or six months, and renew as often as you please; that's my way of doing business—money down, and no questions. Allow me to offer you a glass of sherry." He pushed the decanter across.

Frank helped himself, and stammered out that he wanted six hundred pounds for the purchase of his company; as to repayment, he hoped to repay within the year, either by exchange or through his friends.

"Six hundred!" said the capitalist, his smile growing a shade colder; "certainly, and for so laudable an object! It's a certainty, my dear Mr. Chester; companies are rising every day. You'll make money by it, mark my words; you'll make money, sir." He touched a hand-bell on the table.

"Bring the cheque-book, Henry," to the boy, who answered the summons, "and fill in a blank cheque for six hundred. Mr. Chester, I'm sure your security is undeniable; excuse my mentioning it; merely a matter of form."

"Security!" stammered Frank. "Why, I thought—at least Captain Esdale told me that you—"

"My dear sir," said Mr. Levenson, leaning forward and speaking earnestly, "don't say another word. I quite understand, perfectly so; a little matter of expectancy—of waiting—precisely so. May I ask Mr. Chester's age?"

"Mr. Chester?"

"The gentleman who has the honour to be your father."

"My father died when I was a child. I have neither father nor mother."

"Dear me, very sad. Then you have really no expectations?"

"None."

"And no security at all to offer?"

"None, except my commission."

"Perhaps you have some friends who would lend their names, just for form's sake; Captain Esdale for instance; makes it come so much lighter, you see."

Frank shook his head. "No, Mr. Levenson, I can't ask it. I want the money, and will pay for it. I can give you a hold on my commission as captain, which is surely enough. More than that, I cannot give!"

"The terms will be a little high, Mr. Chester, but I can let you have the money."

The boy entered with the cheque-book. The capitalist signed the filled-up cheque, tore it out of the book, gave the book to the boy again, and the boy disappeared.

"If I understand you, Mr. Chester, you want the sum of six hundred pounds on the security of your commission—a security, I may at once tell you, that is worth but little, as such."

"How do you make that out? It's worth one thousand eight hundred pounds, without what I can get over regulation."

"Exactly so; but in the event of your death or, pardon me, your dismissal from the service?"

"My friends would pay you!" said Chester, indignantly.

"Will they put that on stamped paper?"

"I haven't asked them."

"You may have previous liens on your commission."

"None, on my honour!"

"Pardon me; I only said, might. We are talking business, now. I merely wished to show you the weakness of your security, as such; nothing more. Here is a cheque for six hundred pounds; here is a promissory note at twelve months, to repay me the sum of eight hundred pounds, value received; and here is a paper authorising me to deduct that amount, with interest, from your commission money, should you sell out."

"Why, it's over thirty per cent!" gasped Frank.

"Thirty-three pounds six shillings and eight pence per cent per annum, exactly. Levi opposite would charge you fifty. If you can't pay the money at the twelve months' end, you can renew at ten per cent—a mere bagatelle. Exchanges are going at six hundred now. There's no fear of your not being able to pay it, long before it falls due."

Frank considered for a moment. If he failed to obtain the money, his character in the regiment would be affected, as a man who had put down for purchase, without the means to do so. On the other hand, the fact of becoming a captain was a great fact; an exchange would make it all right; and regiments now remained so short a time abroad, that it would be easy to leave Milly and the baby at home while he went out.

"Well, Mr. Chester, shall I give you the cheque?"

Frank held out his hand, and the treacherous slip of paper was his own. He hurriedly signed what was laid before him for his signature, and, wishing the capitalist "good morning," clapped his hat on, and burst out of the room into the open air.

When he opened his garden gate in the evening, Milly ran out to meet him, all blue ribbons and muslin.

"Well, dearest? Have you got it?"

"Yes, Milly, it's all right," he replied, kissing her. But he did not tell her what he was to pay for it.

"Oh, I'm so glad, you dear old captain!" And Milly clapped her hands and ran in to order dinner, while Frank went up to dress.

In the next Friday's Gazette appeared the following: "111th Regiment, Lieutenant Francis Chester to be captain, by purchase, vice Esdale, who retires."

After this, all went on again in the usual routine. Frank found his duties much lighter than before, and more pleasant; he was able to devote more time to Milly; he had not to go on those dreadful "guards," which used to keep him all night and part of two days. In short, there could be no possible doubt about it; he had done a very wise and sensible thing.

At all events, so he thought, and so, as in duty bound, thought Milly.

He had written to an uncle in India who he thought would be likely to help him in repaying Levenson; and he had gone down once or twice to an old gentleman who had stood godfather to him in years gone by; but the old man had grown crusty and suspicious since those days, and Frank soon found out that there was a vast difference between a half sovereign "tip" to a school-boy, and a tip required by a captain in Her Majesty's Service.

Still, there were only two months gone yet, out of the year of grace, and in ten months something was sure to turn up. "Besides, after all, if the worst comes to the worst, I can always exchange." He said this to himself though, and not to Milly.

But somehow or other ten months more did slip by, in a most unaccountable way, and still he had made no provision towards meeting the eight hundred pounds owing to Mr. Levenson.

"I shall have to renew; that's all," he thought. "Levenson said he would renew, and only charge ten per cent." So the easy-going fellow went on with his work, as though the whole thing were settled comfortably.

On the day previous to that on which the "bill" would fall due, came this letter from Levenson.

"Dear Sir. As your promissory note which I hold for eight hundred pounds falls due the day after you receive this, I shall be glad of a communication from you as to your wishes with regard to meeting it.—I am, your obedient servant,

"J. LEVERSON.

"To Captain Chester, &c., &c."

He answered thus:

"Dear Sir. I find it is not quite convenient to pay off the eight hundred pounds I owe you just at present. I shall, therefore, be obliged if you will renew, as you said, at ten per cent for another year.—Yours, &c.,

"FRANK CHESTER."

By return came the reply:

"Dear Sir. In answer to your favour of yesterday, I enclose promissory note for eight hundred and forty-five pounds at six months, being amount of principal and interest, with expenses for that time. This you will please sign and return, and I will remit your original note cancelled.—Yours, &c.,

"J. LEVERSON."

To this Frank wrote:

"Sir. I asked you to renew for twelve months, and should wish that arrangement carried out. Meanwhile, I enclose the note for six months, signed as you desired.—Yours, &c.,

"FRANK CHESTER."

The capitalist answered:

"Dear Sir. I am sorry I cannot comply with your wishes. My rule is to renew for six months certain at ten per cent—a mode of business practised by no other office in London. At the expiration of that time I shall be glad to meet you, should you still require accommodation, with a view to fresh arrangements.—Yours, &c.,

"J. LEVERSON."

Enclosed was the first note, and this Frank locked up in his desk, among other less costly curiosities already there. Then he sat down and wrote another letter to his uncle in India, setting forth his difficulties, and how they had unavoidably arisen, and entreating him for the loan of six hundred pounds, to stand at interest till he should be able to pay it off.

When Milly came in from a walk, and saw the writing desk in front of her husband, she knew that he had been writing about the money; and although she did not ask the question, Frank understood well enough why the scarlet feather came brushing against his face, and why the warm cheek nestled against his own; but he pretended not to know, and went on scribbling absurd faces and comical little figures on the blotting paper, as if his only thought were to cover it as quickly as possible.

The summer was come again. Strawberries and cream had given in to cherries, and cherries were beginning to look foolish beside the rosy-cheeked apples, when the long-expected letter from Uncle John arrived.

Milly and her husband were sitting in the little arbour at the end of their garden, watching the efforts of the baby to make a clean frock dirty: in which it succeeded admirably, considering its limited understanding and the general lack of available dirt.

For a few minutes the letter lay on the table unopened, both fearing to know its fate; then Milly, as the bolder of the two, snatched it up, and breaking it open, read as follows:

"Dear Nephew. I am sorry to find you have commenced so early in life to run into debt. When at your age, I did the same, and have not paid all off yet. However, as my sister Mary's only child, I cannot leave you altogether in the lurch. I, therefore, enclose a bill for a portion of the sum you mention, to be applied to the reduction of your debt. I am writing this in my 'kutcherry,' where the thermometer stands at ninety-six, so you must excuse brevity.—Your affectionate uncle,

"JOHN PARNELL."

Enclosed was a bill on the Oriental Bank for four hundred pounds. A bright pink slip of paper, all flourishes and watermarks, which Milly thought the prettiest thing she had ever seen.

"Oh, Frank, dear, I'm so glad! How kind of Uncle John, is it not? And now there is only two hundred pounds left to pay off,

and we shall soon save that out of your pay. I was adding up to-day, and I find I can save fifteen shillings a week out of the house-keeping money, and that's thirty-nine pounds a year. And if we wash at home that's another ten pounds, and baby won't want anything for ever so long, and I don't intend going to any more balls or parties. Oh, it'll be such fun, Frank dear, won't it?"

But Frank looked rather glum, as if he did not see much fun in it. Truth to say, he felt remorseful for having deceived Milly.

"Why, Frank dear, you don't look a bit happy. What's the matter? Don't you think it's a good one?" The little woman took up the bill, and began reading it over, as if fearful it was a sham.

"Oh, it's right enough," said Frank, rather sulkily; "give it to me, and I'll go and pay it into the bank before it gets lost." He stretched out his hand and took it away from her.

"Frank! Frank! what is the matter? You never spoke like that before; I'm sure it is quite safe with me, I wouldn't lose it for the world. What is the matter, Frank? You are not angry with me?" She burst into tears, and buried her poor little face on his shoulder.

"My own darling, of course I am not; I didn't mean to be so cross, only it is a nuisance to have to pay away all this money to Leverson, and get nothing for it."

"But, Frank, you did get something for it? You got your company, and that's a great thing to get."

"So it is, but still it does seem like throwing money away. Only think what we might have bought with it; why we could have set up a little carriage! And you know how much you have wished for one."

"But I don't now, Frank, really. I'd much rather walk, indeed I would; and the pony would always be getting ill, and the man would eat ever so much, and you'd get thrown out and have your legs broken, and then you'd be obliged to sell out, and what would become of us then? My dear Frank, I don't want the carriage, indeed I don't."

Next week, carrying with him the bill for four hundred pounds, he started for London, on a visit to Cavendish-court.

The court was as smoke-dyed and dingy as ever—perhaps a trifle more so, than when he saw it in the spring; but Mr. Leverson still looked as cool and as smiling as ever, and was charmed to see him.

After mutual greetings, he produced his bill, handing it over to the money-lender with an intimation that it was to form part payment of the loan.

"Much obliged, Mr. Chester," said Leverson, glancing at it, and throwing it carelessly on the table, "four hundred pounds, yes, exactly, leaving a balance of—of—" he rapidly turned over the leaves of a ledger—"of four hundred and forty-five pounds due September 21st. Twenty-six days yet to run."

"Yes, that's it," said Frank. "Now, what arrangement can you make to let the balance run on for another year?"

"Another year. Twelve months. It's a long time, and money rising every day. Can't we say six months?"

"I want it for a twelvemonth," cried Frank. "I'll pay you fair interest for it. You ought to trust me now, after paying off half."

"So I do, my dear sir, so I do. As you say, half paid off. Still, you see, the four hundred pounds only covers the interest of the loan—little more. The principal still remains."

"And pretty good interest too," broke out Frank. "Thirty-three per cent!"

"Excuse me, Mr. Chester, you came to me, not I to you. You wanted the money, and I gave it, on my own terms, and I will do so again on my own terms."

"How much, in Heaven's name?" cried Frank, frightened at the change in the Leversonian manner.

The capitalist pencilled some figures on a slip of paper, and handed the slip to Frank.

	£	s.	d.
To original debt	445	0	0
To interest to Sept. 21, 18—	178	0	0
To stamps, &c.	1	10	0
Total	624	10	0

"Why, that's more than before!" said Frank, turning pale.

"It is."

"The interest is higher, too."

"Forty per cent. Money is dearer than it was; the security also is less."

"How do you make that out?"

"They are going to reduce the army by two companies per regiment, in which case you will be a supernumerary, and will be liable to be placed on half-pay."

"I shan't pay it!" cried Frank, losing his temper.

"Very good, Mr. Chester; but I still hold your promise to that effect, and a gentleman's word is usually something."

"You must excuse me, Mr. Leverson. I beg your pardon. I'm an excitable sort of fellow, and you know I'm not used to this sort of thing. I'll pay you the money. No, not that, thank you!" as Leverson pushed the new bill towards him. "Not that. I'll pay you the money on the 21st, I think it is. Good morning, sir; sorry I lost my temper. Good day!"

It was in no enviable frame of mind that he hurried along the streets. He felt angry with himself for having broken with Leverson; felt angry with the shops for displaying such stores of wealth, a very little of which was wanting to make his worldly affairs comfortable; felt angry even with poor unoffending Milly.

"If it hadn't been for her and the confounded baby, I could have exchanged at once, and made it all square," he muttered. Which showed him to be in a bitter bad temper indeed.

He had walked along Pall Mall, and turned up St. James's-street, when it struck him he would

look in at Bull's, the exchange agency. "He may have something that will do for me without my going abroad. At all events there is no harm in asking." And so in he walked.

Mr. Bull was a pleasant spoken man, with an official tone in his conversation that gave to his somewhat illegal business quite a Horse Guards' flavour.

He was surrounded by huge sets of bound ledgers and gazettes, and looked altogether like a military secretary in very flourishing circumstances.

On Frank mentioning his business, Mr. Bull pulled down one of the ledgers, and ran his finger down the page.

"Something at home, quiet and comfortable, eh? Let me see. Military train wants eight hundred; adjutancy of militia, one thousand five hundred; ditto volunteers, eight hundred; paymaster in regiment at home would exchange even; cavalry at home, regiment never leaves England, three thousand pounds, and cheap, Captain Chester, cheap, I assure you. A troop frequently goes for more."

Frank explained his object was to get money, not to pay it, and that he was in somewhat urgent need of four hundred pounds.

"Then I've got the very thing for you, Captain Chester! Only came in this morning! Regiment in India, good colonel, prospect of a run among the seniors shortly; first-rate station; only four years more to serve; and my client offers four hundred pounds—just what you want—and passage. It's the best we have had on our books for months, sir, and really worth your serious consideration."

"Thank you," said Frank, "it does seem very fair. I'll think it over. Good morning."

"Perhaps you will favour me with your address, in case I should hear of anything else likely to suit you."

Frank gave his regiment and address, and went out.

"It's an uncommonly good offer," he thought for the fiftieth time as he was whirling along in the train towards home; "just the money I want. And after all, India's not a bad place; Milly will have her carriage, and all that sort of thing; I don't see why she shouldn't like it. Besides, if a girl marries a soldier, she must expect a little knocking about."

Milly ran out and kissed her husband as was her wont, but Frank's kiss was a trifle colder than usual, and he muttered something about being tired and hot, and stumped past her, and went up to his dressing-room, as if he wanted to get away from her. At dinner, too, he answered her questions very sharply, and went on eating very grimly.

"Frank, dear, what is the matter?" asked Milly at night when they went up-stairs.

"Oh, nothing," growled Frank; "I'm bothered."

"Is it about that horrid money, dear?"

"Yes, of course."

"Frank, mayn't I know what it is? Perhaps I could help you."

It was impossible to resist the pretty, patient, winning little creature; so Frank, denouncing himself for a Monster, told her all about the exchange for four hundred pounds; and she, like a brave little woman, as she was, did not oppose it; a fact which made Frank all the more eager to give it up.

About a week before the "bill" would be due Frank received a letter from Levenson, which startled him not a little. It was as follows:

"Dear Sir. I beg to remind you that your promissory note for eight hundred and forty-five pounds, of which a balance of four hundred and forty-five pounds remains against you, will be due on the 21st instant.

"As you have declined to make any arrangement towards meeting it, I suppose you intend to pay it off in full. Should you not do so, and in the event of my not hearing from you in the meantime, I shall have to place the note in my solicitor's hands.

"Your obedient Servant,

"J. LEVERSON."

He took his hat, and went out to try and walk off his anxiety; but the faster he went, the more did it seem to cleave to him; the bright fields lost their beauty; the hedges, reddening in their autumn coats, seemed like so many straight lines leading on to the one inevitable goal awaiting him. So he turned back, and entering the town by another road, went into the club for a game of billiards; but the balls ran so contrary, and he missed so many strokes which were usually a certainty to him, that he threw down his cue in a pet, and went out into the streets again.

As he was passing the "Blue Stag," he saw a knot of men standing inside round the bar.

"Holloa! Chester," cried one of them, "have you heard about poor Travers?"

"No! What about him?" cried Frank, stopping.

"Shot himself, last night! Stockton has just had a letter from the adjutant."

"Poor dear Travers!" said Frank. "What on earth made him do it?"

"Some row about money, I believe; they say he has let in the Jews pretty considerably."

"Well, that's a comfort, at any rate," growled Frank, and strolled on towards home.

Travers had been senior lieutenant in the regiment when Chester purchased his company over him, and since then, not being able to keep pace with his brother officers, had been compelled to exchange to a West Indian regiment: going to the bottom of a list of twenty men long junior to himself in the service.

"Poor fellow," thought Frank, "he is not so far wrong, after all. No more duns where he's gone! It's of no use. I must write to Bull, and take the four hundred pounds. There's only a week more, and then I suppose I shall be clapped in jail, or placed in some equally

pleasant position; not to speak of interest at one hundred per cent. I'll write to Bull to-night. I won't tell Milly till all is settled, and Leverson is paid; I shall have better heart to do so then."

He wrote accordingly. By return of post came Mr. Bull's answer, saying that the exchange was in course of being arranged, and that the money would be paid, minus his commission of twenty pounds, as soon as it appeared in the Gazette. In a postscript he added that should Captain Chester be in immediate want of the money he would advance it at once.

This offer Frank willingly accepted, and, before the week was out, had the pleasure of sending Mr. Leverson a cheque for the four hundred and forty-five pounds, and of receiving a polite note, and his bill cancelled, by return.

A few days afterwards, the Gazette announced the exchange, and nothing was left for Frank but to settle his affairs, and join his new regiment in India.

Yes, there was one other thing. I had nearly forgotten that, though Frank had not forgotten it:

He had to tell Milly.

But he was saved that hard task after all, by Milly herself.

"I am glad you have done it, Frank dear," she whispered, taking his hand in both of hers, and looking up, lovingly, in his face. "I saw the letter lying on the table, and knew at once it was about that."

"But, Milly, do you think you can stand it? I'll leave you at home, if you like."

"Oh, Frank, don't talk so; anything but that! I don't a bit mind going; and it will be so different, now that you are a captain. When shall we start, do you think?"

"Perhaps in a month, perhaps less; I can't tell yet."

"And we shall get out just for the cold weather—how nice it will be!—and we shall see all our old friends again, and I shall have such lots of work to do in getting baby's things ready. We will take out everything this time with us, won't we, Frank?" And then she ran off to tell baby all about it; how she was going back to India, and to the beautiful hills, and to see the monkeys, and the great elephants, and to have the old "bearer" again, and she clapped her hands, and tossed the baby up, and the baby crowed, and screamed, and jumped, and fell fast asleep in her arms; and then Milly drew down the blinds, and laid her in her cot, and kneeling down beside it prayed that it might be always so, and that God would bring no harm to her darlings in the far-off land they were going to. And this was the way in which Frank's little wife bore the news that Frank was so afraid to tell.

Then there came a season of letter-writing, and visiting, and packing, and general confusion, for Frank had got a passage in one of the new troop ships, and was to sail within the month. He had settled his account with Mr. Bull, and paid off several of his most

pressing bills, and found but a small balance in his agent's hands when it was finished.

However, he was clear of Leverson, and what little he still owed his fine Indian pay would soon provide; all which gave him courage for his work, and he went about cheerfully with Milly, falling in with all her plans, and cordially approving of all her purchases. And so all the purchases got to be completed, and all the farewells said, and Frank stood on the great ship's deck watching the blue land of his home grow fainter and dimmer over the wave tops, and pointed out to Milly the bluff headlands and snug harbours they might never see again. And so they watched till evening faded into night, and the great sea lights glimmered out along the coast, and the heavy south-west wind came sighing along from the wide ocean whither they were bound, whistling through the cordage, and making the vast ship quiver and plunge, and send the black water from her bows in great angry waves. And so at last Milly, shivering, drew her husband away, and they went down to the brightly-lighted saloon below, and lost themselves in the crowd of strange faces there.

Six months roll away, and husband and wife are settled in Frank's new regiment.

The ills that Milly dreaded have passed lightly over their heads; the baby has increased in stature and in power of lungs, under the old "bearer;" and Frank is well and strong, and save for a short grumble now and then at the heat, or at the monotony of the station, appears contented.

They have been living very quietly. There are still debts at home to be paid, and expenses have increased in India since they were there before. Frank has been making inquiries as to insuring his life, but the premiums are high, and their income only just suffices to keep them straight, and to pay off by degrees the remaining home bills. Thus it comes to pass that the idea of the insurance is allowed to drop.

"Next year," thought Frank, "these things will be all squared, and then we shall be able to turn round. I must chance it till then. It isn't as though Milly had nothing; she has her own hundred a year, though she can't touch the principal. What with that, and what with an officer's wife's pension, she wouldn't be a beggar."

But that year the dreaded cholera came tearing through the country, and, settling upon Frank's regiment, counted its victims by tens, and soon by hundreds. At a moment's notice the men were marched into camp, and hurried up and down in the deadly jungles, now rank and steaming from the autumn rains, in a vain attempt to fly from the pestilence.

Night and day did the officers tend their men, exhorting them to bear up and fight against their fears; night and day did they see their words of hope falsified by sudden and cruel death.

Foremost among the helpers of the sick was

Chester. Milly and the child were sent off to the hills on the first outbreak. Thus freed from anxiety on their account, he was able to devote all his time and energies to his soldiers, and he did it nobly. Many were the wild words of cursing he stayed, as he bent his face over the dying, and spoke of the home the sick had quitted, and the Heaven they were nearing; spoke words such as soldiers love, of father or mother; caught from parched lips the last few sentences of love, and held many a fevered hand till the last hard struggle was over.

Then came a slackening in the disease. Strong men no longer died in a few hours, but lived for days; recoveries became more common; medicine began to assert itself; the survivors no longer sat in moody silence, awaiting who should be the next; but ate, and drank, and set about their duties like good soldiers, and good men.

At length came a day when no more cases were reported, and on the same evening an "order" was published, thanking Captain Chester for the efficient and soldierlike way in which he had discharged his duties during the trying time just past. "The colonel commanding," it concluded, "has never witnessed such entire relinquishment of self, and such a truly noble disposition to alleviate the sufferings of his men; and he takes this opportunity of publicly thanking that officer in the name of himself and of the regiment. It is further the intention of the colonel commanding to submit Captain Chester's name to the commander-in-chief, in order that his excellency may have an opportunity of rewarding his services as they deserve."

"Too late!" sighed Frank wearily, as he read the order. "It has come too late, I fear!" And then he went on writing his daily epistle to Milly.

When he went out to post the letter, he felt hot and feverish, his bones seemed full of aches and pains, and his head was heavy and dull. "So different to what I was in the old regiment!" thought Frank.

However, he posted his letter, and then went back to the deserted bungalow and turned in.

All that night he tossed about. What little sleep he got, was broken with dreams in which his own little Milly, was ever present, and yet never near him. Then he woke up with a start, and cried out her name, and the affrighted "punkah coolie" roused up, and pulled away wildly at the rope, and the sleepy old "bearer" crept up to the door, and sat cowering when he heard the strange rambling talk of his master, and shook his head, and slunk back again to his mat, and wished his mistress were there.

Next morning Frank sent off for the doctor.

"How long have you had this on you?" asked the doctor.

"I haven't been quite the thing for a week; but last night it came on worse, and my head felt as though it would split."

"I'll send you a draught that shall set you to-rights again."

But the draught did him no good. He lay gazing at Milly's picture over the door, and never spoke all day. The servants sat outside in a group, terror-stricken at their master's silence, and whispering long stories of former "sahibs," and how they had been taken when their "mem-sahibs" were far away in the Hills, and how Fate must be accomplished, whether it were white man or black.

But in the evening, when it was near post-time, Frank called out to the "bearer" to bring him the writing-block, and, sitting up in his bed, wrote a few lines to Milly. His hand shook so, that he could hardly hold the pen; but he applied himself to the task, and, steadying himself on his elbows, covered the sheet with all the bits of chit-chat his poor aching head could remember, and, sealing it up, gave it to the bearer to post.

In the middle of the night the bearer was startled by a loud cry. Running in to his master, he found him sitting up in bed, tossing his arms, and calling out for Milly. The old man was so frightened that he bolted off for the doctor, and told him his master was gone mad, and would be dead if he did not come at once.

"I must telegraph for his wife," said the doctor, when he saw him. Sitting down, he wrote a note to the telegraph office, giving it to the bearer, and bidding him run as though his life depended on it.

Then he set to work on Frank, cutting away all the old curls, and wrapping up his poor head in towels, with a great lump of ice on the top of them.

At the sound of the noon-day gun, Chester started up and, clutching the doctor's hand, asked fiercely:

"Where is my wife? What have you done with my wife? Where is Milly? Oh, Milly, Milly, don't forget your husband!" Then he sank back again exhausted, and closing his eyes fell into a heavy slumber.

At four o'clock the doctor went out, and telegraphed to the hotel at the foot of the Hills, asking if Mrs. Chester had left. In half an hour the answer came back, that she had left, and would arrive about nine that evening.

Then he went back to Frank.

He was awake; his face was flushed, and his pulse hammered like a steam engine; but his eyes were not so wild, and his voice, though low, was calm and collected.

"Is she coming?" he whispered. "When will she be here? Don't let it be too late, doctor."

"She will be here soon; she left some hours ago."

"I couldn't die happy without her. We have been very happy together, doctor, very happy. It's hard to part like this; it's very, very hard."

The doctor tried to reassure him, but in vain.

"I'm going, doctor; it's no good saying I'm not. I knew it, a week ago. I wish Milly would come!"

Then he dozed off again, and the ticking of the clock kept time with his heavy breathing.

About seven he called out, without opening his eyes:

"Will she be long now, doctor? Is she coming? Don't let it be too late!"

"She will be here about nine," said the doctor, damping the towels; "not much longer to wait now."

Frank dozed off again. A few minutes before the hour, he cried out once more:

"Is it nine yet, doctor? Is she come?"

"It will strike nine directly," answered the other; "only a few minutes more."

"Call the bearer, will you, doctor," he lifted himself up and looked towards the door; "and tell him to get my brushes and some water. I must dress myself for Milly; she likes to see my hair tidy. You know, doctor, it was my hair she liked so much when we were first in love, and it must not be untidy now, must it?"

They brought the brushes and the water, and the poor fellow brushed away at his bald head, and combed the imaginary curls over his hot forehead.

"She likes them best so, doctor. Lay me down easily, so as not to disarrange them; now, put away the bottles; Milly doesn't like bottles lying about. She's a tidy little wife, doctor, and I want everything to look nice." Then he started up wildly. "Don't touch me, doctor! I hear her coming. I hear her coming! Milly, Milly, your poor old Frank's here—don't mind his not getting up, it's only a little headache—he will be well soon, and we'll go away together, and be happy. Tell her to come in doctor, will you; those servants are keeping the doors locked."

The carriage drove up, and poor Milly, pale and frightened, alighted. The doctor laid his hand on her arm, and with a quiet motion of his head led her into the room.

"Oh, Frank!"

"Milly, darling!" And the living and the dying lay clasped in each other's arms.

"I thought you would come Milly. It's a long way, isn't it; but you don't mind for Frank?"

"Oh, Frank, darling, don't talk so. I never wanted to leave you. Why did you send me away? Oh, what shall I do, what shall I do!"

"We were very happy in the little cottage, Milly. It was the 'Company' did it—Lever-son, I mean—but it's all for the best—you'll come to me by-and-by, Milly darling—you'll never forget your poor old Frank?"

"I don't want to stay behind, Frank. I want to die with you!"

"We'll walk through the woods home, Milly; the sun is not hot there, and the church bells sound so well under the trees; only another

week, and they'll ring for our Marriage!" He was back again at the old Kent parsonage, in the days of their wooing.

Then he turned towards her, and feeling about with his hands, called out:

"Milly! Milly! Where are you, darling? Don't go that way; there's the dark deep lake there. Milly dear, give me your hand. I didn't want to leave England, but that man made me—we couldn't pay the money, you know. Milly, they say I did my duty. God knows I loved my men, and I loved my Milly. Now I see you—so near me, so bright—the church chimes are ringing—it's for us, Milly—our wedding-day—so happy—so very happy—"

The doctor drew her tenderly from that long embrace, and led her away to his own house. She never spoke or sighed, but walked beside him like one in a trance, and sat down in the chair he placed for her, like a little child. For days she sat or stood as they told her, eating and drinking what was placed before her, and never uttering one word. At length, on the third day they brought her child to her. For a moment she looked at it vacantly; then, as it stretched out its tiny arms, she started up, clasped it to her breast, and burst into a flood of tears.

"It is better so," said the doctor, as he shut the door and went out; "Time must do the rest."

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